

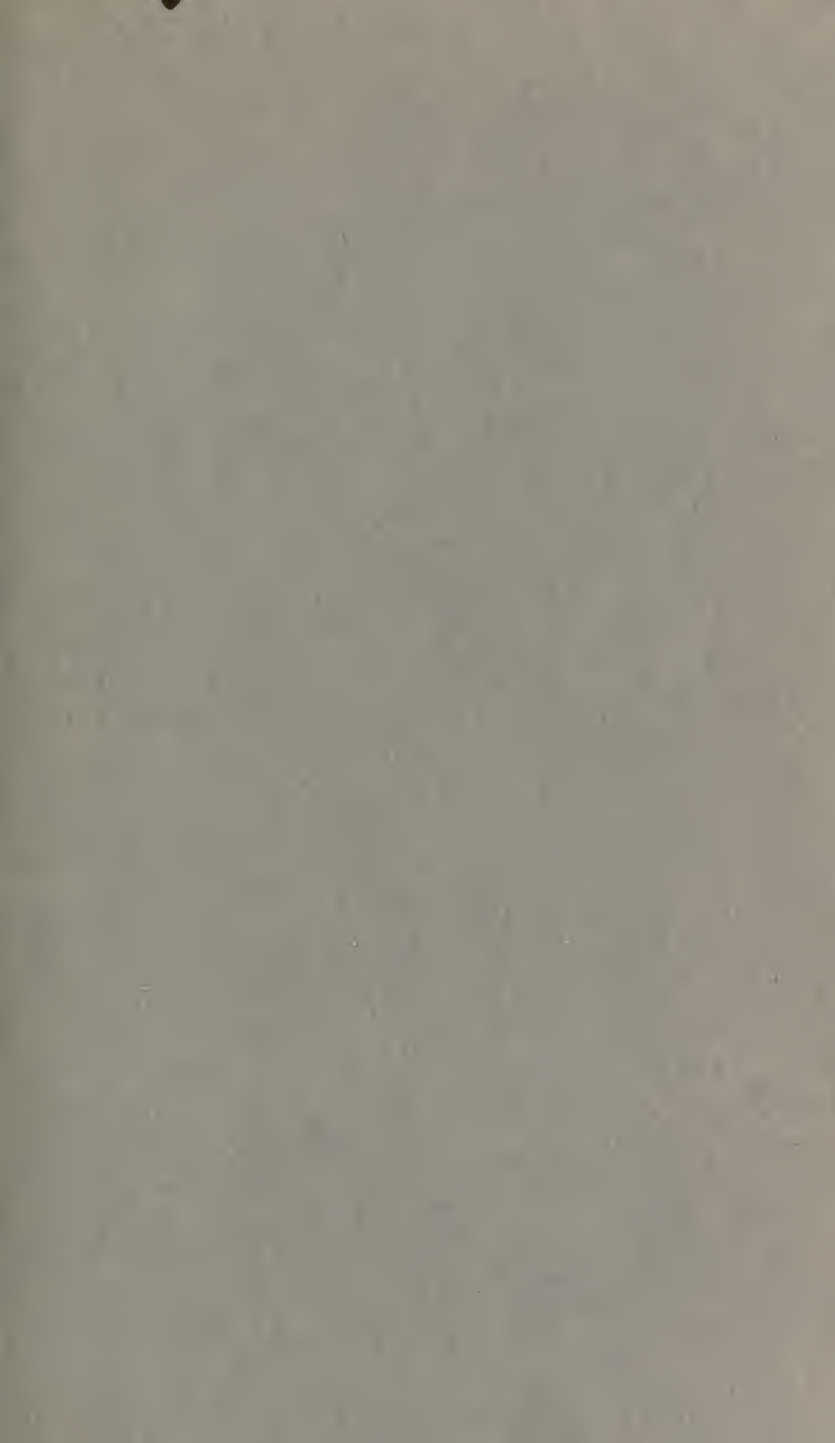
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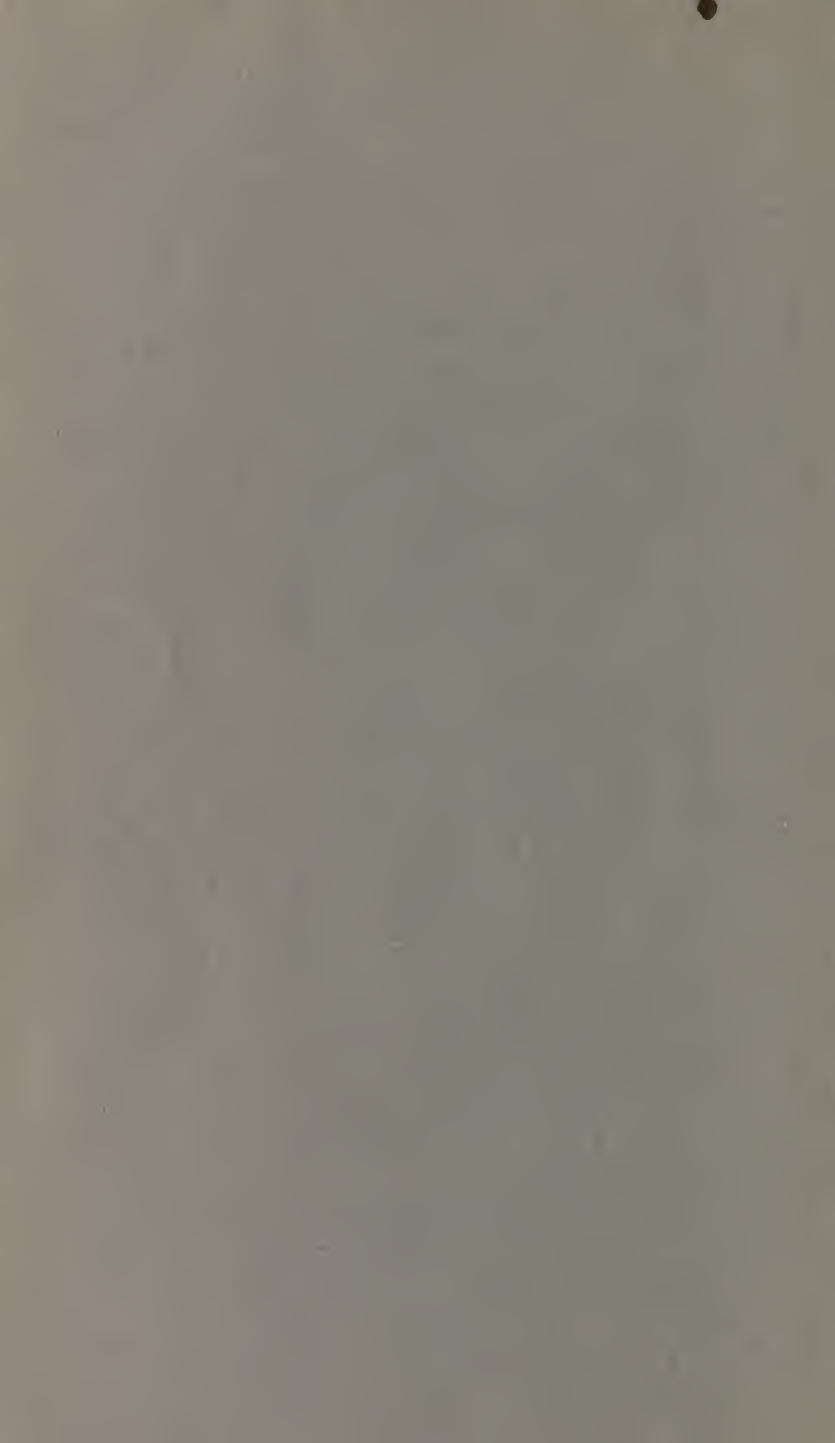
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# MOLIÈRE AND SHERIDAN

A THESIS FOR THE DOCTORATE PRESENTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF LETTERS



BY

JAMES MATHEWSON MILNE, M.A.



*Université de Rennes*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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MOORE in his "Memoirs of Sheridan" writes:—"It would be a task not uninteresting to enter into a detailed comparison of the characteristics and merits of Mr. Sheridan, as a dramatic writer, with those of the other great masters of the art, and to consider how far they differed or agreed with each other in the structure of their plots and management of their dialogue—in the mode of laying the train of their repartee, or pointing the artillery of their wit." It has been our endeavour in the following pages to trace such a comparison between Molière and Sheridan, and also to show what direct influence the one can be said to have exercised on the other.

We are struck, in the first place, by the difference in the bulk of work done by the two men; but that is easily explained. Molière was actor and dramatist all his life, "dying in harness," as the saying is. The stage was his profession from beginning to end, and latterly he was acting under singularly propitious conditions which favoured the production of a large amount of work in short time. The career of Sheridan as dramatist, on the other hand, ended at the very early age of twenty-nine. He wrote nothing for the stage after that, save his single tragedy, "Pizarro," but gave himself up to political life, where he shone with as great brilliance as he did as a dramatist. He was, indeed, connected with the stage to the end, being first part, and latterly whole, proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre. But he wrote nothing after the age of twenty-nine. His works are, therefore, exceedingly few compared with those of Molière. Indeed, if we discard his tragedy and "A Trip to Scarborough," which is but a purified version of Vanbrugh's "Relapse," we are left with but five comedies to consider. The quantity may be small, but the quality is of the highest, and these five comedies will perpetuate the name of Sheridan in English literature as that of Molière is perpetuated in French literature.

Molière found in his surroundings all the materials required for his comedies. In the words of Meredith—"Politically, it is accounted a misfortune for France that her nobles thronged to the Court of Louis XIV. It was a boon to the comic poet. He had that lively quicksilver world of the animalcule passions, the huge pretensions, the placid absurdities under his eyes in full activity; vociferous quacks and snapping dupes, hypocrites,

posturers, extravagants, pedants, rose-pink ladies and mad grammarians, sonneteering marquises, high-flying mistresses, plain-minded maids, interthreading as in a loom, noisy as at a fair."

The characters of Molière's comedies are sufficiently representative of the age he lived in to have proved of intense interest to the audience he wrote for and to continue to prove interesting to future audiences as a picture of that age. But not only so, however. There is a universality in the characters of Molière which keeps the types alive and fresh throughout succeeding generations. Manners may change on the surface, but human nature remains pretty much what it was, and although we have not with us now those types in their outward form that Molière portrays, we can still observe the characteristics of those types and see the same foibles and weaknesses in men and women of to-day as in Molière's time. The range of Molière's comedies is so wide and all-embracing that one who walks in the same path must necessarily come in contact with him, and a dramatist posterior to him may portray manners which are different, but the inner life which he portrays must always bear a certain resemblance. There is as much realism in Molière as makes his comedies true to life, and he depicts the manners of those he saw around him. A posterior dramatist then, writing a comedy of manners, must differ widely, but writing a comedy of life must always have many points in common.

Molière, then, found around him an inexhaustible store from which to draw his comedies. What was the source from which Sheridan drew? In the first place, he had his own experiences, which formed a drama in themselves. Courtship under difficulties, rivals, duels, romantic marriage and the stubbornness of parents, were all subjects for which he could draw on himself. Even in his own time there was a rumour that "The Rivals" was in great part the story of his own difficulties. Thus, in a letter to Mrs. Sheridan from her sister, we read:—"I was told last night that it was his own story, and therefore called 'The Rivals'; but I do not give any credit to this intelligence."

But for Sheridan, as for Molière, the society he mixed with was the main source of inspiration. When George III. came to the throne in 1760, England was in a better state, indeed, than in the days of the Restoration, but society in its upper ranks was still tainted with vice. To quote Thackeray in "The Four Georges":—"Around a young king, himself of the most exemplary and undoubted piety, lived a court society as dissolute as our country ever knew. George II.'s bad morals bore their fruit in George III.'s early years; as I believe that a knowledge of that good man's example, his moderation, his frugal simplicity and God-fearing life, tended infinitely to improve the morals of the country and purify the whole nation." And later he speaks of "the awful debauchery and extravagance which prevailed in the great English

society of those days." This state of affairs finds little reflection in the plays of Sheridan, which are, morally, a distinct advance on those of the Restoration period. Despite the looseness of the upper strata of society, a healthier public opinion was being formed among the middle classes, and the immorality and coarseness of Restoration Drama would no longer be tolerated. Sheridan was not writing for this dissolute court society, but for a wider audience. He was not born into the highest society, nor had he the favoured position and security that Molière's court connection gave him, but his ability and his brilliant wit soon opened all doors to him, and gave him as much opportunity of studying the manners of his time as Molière had. That this society was brilliant and polished, although perhaps decadent, we gather from the records of the times. Nothing was received with so great acclamation as a *bon mot* which was passed from mouth to mouth and handed down in Letters and Memoirs to a posterity which often finds difficulty in appreciating them. Thus, Horace Walpole finds it worth while recording the following in his Letters—"George Selwyn, t'other night, seeing Lady Euston with Lady Petersham, said, 'There's my Lady Euston, and my Lady us'd to't.'" In a society which was as fond of wit and so appreciative of it, a character like Sheridan's would be warmly welcomed and would have full scope for development. But that the audience for which he wrote would not tolerate the slightest hint of immorality, is proved by his letter to his father-in-law, where he says, with reference to "The Duenna," and under date October, 1775:—

"Dear Sir,—We received your songs to-day, with which we are exceedingly pleased. I shall profit by your proposed alterations; but I'd have you to know that we are much too chaste in London to admit such strains as your Bath spring inspires. We dare not propose a peep beyond the ankle on any account; for the critics in the pit at a new play are much greater prudes than the ladies in the boxes."

His early years had been passed in Bath, the rendezvous of the fashionable world, and he had around him there plenty of material for observation. Horace Walpole gives us an interesting picture of society there. Under the date January 15, 1775, he writes:—"They hold a Parnassus-fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes. . . . You may think this a fiction, or exaggeration. Be dumb, unbelievers! The collection is printed, published.—Yes, on my faith, there are *bouts-rimés* on a buttered muffin, made by Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland; receipts to make them by Corydon the venerable, alias George Pitt; others very pretty, by Lord Palmerston; some by Lord Carlisle; many by Mrs. Miller herself, that have no fault but wanting metre; and immortality promised to her without end or



measure. In short, since folly, which never ripens to madness but in this hot climate, ran distracted, there never was anything so entertaining or so dull." The *Précieuses Ridicules* were not dead, and Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite had probably living prototypes whose verses and criticism were of equal worth.

The relations between French and English society were of the closest. English politicians and men of letters were as much at home and as eagerly welcomed in the salons of Paris as in London. This feeling may not have extended to the middle and lower classes, for we read again in the Letters of Horace Walpole under date November 16, 1755 :—"England seems returning ; for those who are not in Parliament, there are nightly riots at Drury-Lane, where there is an anti-Gallican party against some French dancers. The young men of quality have protected them till last night, when, being opera night, the galleries were victorious." But we have plenty of references in the Letters of such as Madame Du Deffand to show that, even when political relations were strained, intercourse was frequent and cordial between the leading intellectual lights on each side of the Channel. These relations affected the speech and idioms as well as the thought. George Selwyn scarcely writes a letter without expressing some thought in French, and "the prevailing adoption of French idioms into the English language" is admirably burlesqued in a reputedly anonymous letter sent to Horace Walpole, which he includes under date April 5, 1785. "A specimen of the English Language, as it will probably be written and spoken in the next century. In a letter from a lady to her friend, in the reign of George the Fifth.

"Alamode Castle, June 20, 1840.

"Dear Madam,—I no sooner found myself here than I visited my new apartment, which is composed of five pieces : the small room, which gives upon the garden, is practised through the great one ; and there is no other issue. As I was quite exceeded with fatigue, I had no sooner made my toilette than I let myself fall on a bed of repose, where sleep came to surprise me, etc."

In Sheridan, we have French expressions scattered throughout the plays, and even Lory has his "de haut en bas." In "The Rivals" occur the suggestive names of Mr. Du-Peigne, the valet ; and Mr. De-la-grace. In Act II., Sc. 4, also, we have the following :—

SIR LUCIUS : Mr. Acres, I am delighted *to embrace you*.

ACRES : My dear Sir Lucius, *I kiss your hands*.

The latter expression is used also by Jack Absolute, when his father retires in high dudgeon (Act II., Sc. 1) ; and again by Lord Foppington in the last scene of a "Trip to Scarborough."

Thus, whilst Sheridan had abundant material to draw from in the society in which he lived, he had also every opportunity of becoming acquainted with French thought and manners, and of having his interest in French literature quickened.

## CHAPTER I.

## "THE DUENNA."

"The Duenna" is one of Sheridan's best-known plays, and deservedly so. The plot is of the stereotyped character. The parent wishes to marry his daughter to a Jew for the sake of his money, whilst she has set her affections on a poorer man. There is a double love interest in the play which makes it more complicated, and recalls to our mind the double love interest of "Le Dépit Amoureux," "Les Fourberies de Scapin," and "L'Avare." The situation in "Le Tartuffe" is also parallel.

DAMIS : Si même ardeur enflamme et ma sœur et Valère,  
La sœur de cet ami, vous le savez, m'est chère.

("Le Tartuffe").

The plot itself is neither new nor original—it is one of those plots of which one might almost say that it never was new. When we consider the working out of it, however, we find originality and pure comedy. The hoodwinking of old Jerome, the over-reaching of Isaac by means of his own machinations, the mistake of the lovers, and the final smoothing out of the plot and discomfiture of the Jew provide scenes which are of the best humour. There is practically no satire in the play. It is in Sheridan's best form, and abounds in that wealth of humour and pure wit which make his plays remarkable.

What does Sheridan owe to Molière in "The Duenna"? For the main feature of the plot—the hoodwinking of old Jerome—we are at once thrown back on "Le Sicilien," and the resemblance between the two is too close to be accidental. In both plays the old man is deceived by exactly the same trick. The person he most wishes to keep safely in his house passes out under his very eyes disguised as another. Sheridan must have read this short play of Molière's, and thought that more could be made of this idea, or that it could be used to greater advantage. It is worthy of note that in no other play, save in "L'Ecole des Maris," does Molière make use of this idea. Molière often repeats himself in his works, but in this case Sheridan was able to adopt an idea which was not hackneyed, which had been, as it were, side-tracked and allowed to remain almost unnoticed amid all Molière's wealth of scheme and stratagem. From being the *dénouement* of a short sketch, it becomes, in the hands of Sheridan, the *raison d'être* of the plot of one of his most elaborate plays. We have here one of the clearest instances of Sheridan's debt to Molière. No other proof

were needed to confute the statement that perhaps Sheridan never really read Molière. It is very improbable that precisely the same idea should have occurred to each author independently. Their similarity is too obvious and striking at first glance to be merely accidental, and when we add the weight of evidence supplied by other resemblances between Molière and Sheridan, no doubt can remain that in this case the latter directly borrowed "The Duenna's" *coup d'état* from Molière. The reasons which bring about this *coup d'état* are different, but the trick is the same and the results are the same. Nor does the similarity affect merely this one point. The opening scene of the two plays is absolutely identical. The soliloquy of Lopez is similar in meaning to that of Hali, and the condition in which they find themselves is the same. They discharge the same duties and are each pushing the love affairs of a master. The similarity between the two characters can be traced throughout the play, but is nowhere more pronounced than in the opening scene. Their entrance is followed soon by that of the masqueraders, and the performance of the latter is quickly interrupted by him for whose ears their music was *not* intended. Don Jerome appears with a blunderbuss and Don Père with a sword.

Thus far, then, "The Duenna" is practically "Le Sicilien," with the omission of the episodes of the latter, which lead up to the *dénouement*. The similarity extends to the very names—Don Père and Don Pedro, the father of Clara. We have early greater complication in "The Duenna" by the introduction of the double love interest—collateral plots. It is further complicated by the fact that Antonio formerly loved Clara. Now he loves Louisa and his friend and brother-in-law elect loves Clara. For a similar situation, one might compare "Les Femmes Savantes," where Clitandre changes his allegiance from one sister to the other, or "Don Garcie de Navarre," where the Countess has to endure for a time the indignity of abandonment. But in this case Sheridan's idea is prompted by the necessities of his plot, and it is this situation which makes possible the scene in the convent and the mistakes of the lovers.

But "Le Sicilien" is not the only play of Molière's with which "The Duenna" may be compared. A vein of similarity can be traced between it and Monsieur de Pourceaugnac. The situation in these two plays is practically identical. In both we have two lovers separated by an obstinate father who desires for his daughter a richer husband, and takes no account of her own likes or dislikes. Molière and Sheridan both desire to make the hoodwinked lover one with whom their audiences will have no sympathy. Molière, therefore, makes his a native of Limoges, and Sheridan makes his a Jew. From the commencement the audience is predisposed against those characters, and is more inclined to enjoy their folly and final downfall. Both have a



very high opinion of themselves and of their own capabilities, and each is the more easily duped owing to his overweening confidence in himself. Monsieur de Porceaugnac displays more the characteristics of the country bumpkin; but the shrewdness of "Little Solomon" serves the same purpose in the end. Both characteristics lead to over-credulity which wrecks the plans so deeply laid by father and by lover. As for the development of the plot, a similarity between the two plays can be shown on broad lines but not in details. The means employed are dissimilar, the general result is identical. Thus the father is duped in the one case by the lying assertions of Sbrigani and the schemes of that gentleman and his confederates; in the other case by the Duenna and her machinations; in both cases by the servants and confederates of the lovers whose happiness depends upon the success of their schemes. More complexity is introduced into the plot of "The Duenna" by the double love interest, which allows the author the opportunity of bringing about Isaac's ruin by perhaps a neater and more humorous trick than is the case in Monsieur de Porceaugnac. The latter's excessive credulity and rusticity bring about his downfall; but in the case of the former the audience is kept entertained by his self-confidence on the very brink of his hope's destruction.

The other characters of "The Duenna" are for the most part of a stereotyped character. The fathers who are troubled by their "obstinate daughters," the lovers whose love affairs will *not* run smooth are the *sine qua non* of the comedies of both authors. There is little originality there. Only the plot is different in each in its development. The love element is still predominant. All the action turns on the schemes of the youthful lovers to frustrate the choice of their parents; and, as has been shown, the plot of almost all the plays of Molière, with which we are dealing, turn on the same subject. The working out of the plot, however, and the incidents introduced, lend themselves to original treatment, and in the treatment of his plots Sheridan is original. Yet throughout we can trace a scene and an incident to Molière as easily as an outstanding character, and can show at least a probability that the one is derived from the other, consciously or unconsciously. If we have no absolute proof to show that single scenes and incidents correspond to others in Molière, at least the similarity of so many gives an aggregate proof, and shows that the similarity is not a mere supposition. It is obvious that Sheridan was steeped in Molière. There need be no charge of plagiarism brought against him: but he has not succeeded in avoiding the "starts of recollection" which he tells us he wished to avoid.

To examine the play in detail. It has been shown that the entrance of Lopez, and his sentiments, correspond to those of Hali in "Le Sicilien."

LOPEZ : Well, of all services, to serve a young lover is the hardest. Not that I am an enemy to love ; but my love and my master's differ strangely. Don Ferdinand is much too gallant to eat, drink, or sleep : now my love gives me an appetite. Then I am fond of dreaming of my mistress, and I love dearly to toast her. This cannot be done without good sleep and good liquor : hence my partiality to a feather-bed and a bottle.

HALI : Sotte condition que celle d'un esclave, de ne vivre jamais pour soi et d'être toujours tout entier aux passions d'un maître, de n'être réglé que par ses humeurs et de se voir réduit à faire ses propres affaires de tous les soucis qu'il peut prendre ! Le mien me fait ici épouser ses inquiétudes, et, parcequ'il est amoureux, il faut que nuit et jour je n'aie aucun repos.

Compare, also, the remonstrances of Lopez in Act I., Sc. 2, and those of Gros-René in Sc. 7 of "Sganarelle":—

LOPEZ : Truly, sir, I think that a little sleep once in a week or so—

DON FERD. : Peace, fool ! don't mention sleep to me.

LOPEZ : No, no, sir, I don't mention your lowbred, vulgar, sound sleep ; but I can't help thinking that a gentle slumber, or half an hour's dozing, if it were only for the novelty of the thing—

DON FERD. : Peace, booby, I say !

GROS-RENÉ : Avez-vous le diable dans le corps  
 Pour ne pas succomber à de pareils efforts ?  
 Depuis huit jours entiers, avec vos longues traites,  
 Nous sommes à piquer des chiennes de mazettes  
 De qui le train maudit nous a tant secoués  
 Que je m'en sens, pour moi, tous les membres roués,  
 Sans préjudice encor d'un accident bien pire  
 Qui m'afflige un endroit que je ne veux pas dire ;  
 Cependant, arrivé, vous sortez bien et beau  
 Sans prendre de repos ni manger un morceau.

The servant who is aiding his master in his love adventures is an exceedingly common figure in Molière, and not so common in Sheridan. Lopez approaches Molière's type, but he, too, plays a less prominent part than do the French servants. The scene at the window has already been referred particularly to that in "Le Sicilien" (Sc. 4), and, generally, it may be compared with the scenes of masqueraders in many of Molière's plays. The scene at the window in "L'Etourdi" (Act I., Sc. 3) and the intervention of Trufaldin is not dissimilar. The criticism of Clara in the



second scene, which ends so favourably for her, is in all respects similar to that of Lucile in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" (Act III., Sc. 9), whilst the fear of Gros-René in the "*Dépit Amoureux*," "J'ai bien peur que ses yeux resserrent votre chaîne," recalls "Ah, those cursed smiles!" When we read that Clara's unnatural stepmother wishes to force her to enter a convent, we at once think of the stepmother in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*" whose designs were similar; whilst in "*L'Avare*," one heroine is threatened with the convent, and the other with an odious husband. The idea of the heroine retiring to a convent is especially frequent in Molière. Such plays as "*Don Garcie de Navarre*," "*Don Juan*," "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," and "*Monsieur de Porceaugnac*" are sufficient to illustrate this; and in "*The Duenna*" Sheridan strikes a similar note.

Antonio is still jealous of Ferdinand. He is, in fact, "in a humour to suspect everybody." His state of mind is similar to that of Eraste in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*," but does not reach the pitch of supreme jealousy shown by Don Garcie de Navarre. Don Ferdinand's intrusion into Clara's bedroom reminds us of a similar scene in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," where the hero is surprised in the room of the heroine.

The scene where Don Jerome argues with his children and wishes to lay down the law to his daughter is very similar to many in Molière, Don Jerome's greeting to his son—"What, I suppose you have been serenading too! Eh, disturbing some peaceable neighbourhood with villainous catgut and lascivious piping!"—recalls the ironical words of Polidore to Valère:—

"Je suis un étrange homme et d'une humeur terrible,  
D'accuser un enfant si sage et si paisible!  
Las! il vit comme un saint, et dedans la maison  
Du matin jusqu'au soir il est en oraison.  
Dire qu'il pervertit l'ordre de la nature,  
Et fait du jour la nuit, ô la grande imposture!"

("Dépit Amoureux," Act III., Sc. 6).

Each play which turns on the disobedience of a daughter contains such a scene, and we may particularly refer to "*Sganarelle*" and "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*." Here we have both son and daughter pitted against the father. In many of Molière's plays the brother of the father takes the part of the lovers, as in "*Les Femmes Savantes*" and "*Le Tartuffe*." The most outstanding example in Molière of son and daughter in unison against the father is in "*L'Avare*," where the double love interest presents a striking similarity to that in "*The Duenna*." At this point we may note the sentiment of Jerome on marriage, and particularly the phrase "Marriage generally makes a great change." How often does Molière put the same idea into the words of his older characters! Compare the views of Anselme in "*L'Etourdi*" (Act IV., Sc. 3), and those of "*Sganarelle*" (Sc. 1).

ANSELME : "Quand on ne prend en dot que la seule beauté  
Le remords est bien près de la solennité,  
Et la plus belle femme a très peu de défense  
Contre cette tiédeur qui suit la jouissance."  
(*"L'Etourdi."*)

GORGIBUS : "Valère, je crois bien, n'est pas de toi chéri ;  
Mais, s'il ne l'est amant, il le sera mari.  
Plus que l'on ne le croit ce nom d'époux engage,  
Et l'amour est souvent un fruit du mariage."  
(*"Sganarelle."*)

In "*L'Impromptu de Versailles*" we have the following dialogue :—

MOLIÈRE : Taisez-vous, ma femme, vous êtes une bête.

MADemoisELLE Grand merci, Monsieur mon mari. Voilà ce que

MOLIÈRE : c'est : *le mariage change bien les gens*, et vous ne m'auriez pas dit cela il y a dix-huit mois.

Sheridan again puts the same sentiment into the mouth of Mrs. Malaprop in "*The Rivals*." It is naturally the view taken by all the guardians who wish to force their wards into distasteful marriages, a view which acts as a salve to their own conscience. Don Ferdinand as adviser to his father suffers the fate of Cléante as adviser to his brother Orgon ("*Le Tartuffe*," Act IV., Sc. 3).

DON FERD. : Surely, sir, my sister's inclinations should be consulted in a matter of this kind, and some regard paid to Don Antonio, being my particular friend.

DON JER. : That, doubtless, is a very great recommendation !  
I certainly have not paid sufficient respect to it.

DON FERD. : There is not a man living I would sooner choose for a brother-in-law.

DON JER. : Very possible ; and if you happen to have e'er a sister, who is not at the same time a daughter of mine, I'm sure I shall have no objection to the relationship ; but at present, if you please, we'll drop the subject.

DON FERD. : Nay, sir, 'tis only my regard for my sister makes me speak.

DON JER. : Then, pray sir, in future, let your regard for your father make you hold your tongue.

CLÉANTE : Si par quelque conseil vous souffrez qu'on réponde—

ORGON : Mon frère, vos conseils sont les meilleurs du monde ;  
Ils sont bien raisonnés, et j'en fais un grand cas ;  
Mais vous trouverez bon que je n'en use pas.

(*"Le Tartuffe."*)

The same welcome is given to the advisers of Sganarelle in "*L'Amour Médecin*" (Act I., Sc. 1).

"Tous ces conseils sont admirables assurément ; mais je les

tiens un peu intéressés, et trouve que vous me conseillez fort bien pour vous. Vous êtes orfèvre, Monsieur Josse, etc.”

We now come to one of the most important scenes in the play—that where the Duenna hoodwinks her old master and takes the place of her young mistress. The Duenna herself is a creation of Sheridan's which can scarcely be compared with any of Molière's. The servants and the “femmes d'intrigue” in many of the French plays are somewhat similar, but do not as a rule play so important a part as the Duenna, who traps two of the principal characters in the play and catches a wealthy husband for herself, whether she manages to keep him or not. The stratagem of the Duenna imposing upon Don Jerome has already been referred to that in “Le Sicilien,” and the striking similarity between the two has been shown. There is another play of Molière's, however, which contains almost the same idea and has many points in common with “The Duenna”—namely, “L'Ecole des Maris.” Here, again, we have Isabelle, under the name of Léonor, escaping the surveillance of Sganarelle by favour of the night—the man who most desires to keep her, putting her out on the supposition that she is another person. Such is the stratagem in all three plays.

We have now the meeting of the two heroines, both runaways from the severity of their parents. The request made by Louisa—“Will you give me leave to borrow your name, as I see occasion?” and the use she makes of the permission are further strongly reminiscent of “L'Ecole des Maris,” where Isabelle carries her stratagem to a successful issue through having (*without* permission) borrowed the name of Léonor.

“Ma sœur, je vous demande un généreux pardon,  
Si de mes libertés j'ai tâché votre nom.”

Isaac's first appearance in the play practically gives us his whole character. His appearance is greeted in the same way as that of Monsieur de Porceaugnac, with whom, as we have seen, he has many points in common.

CLARA: Who is he? He's a strange figure.

NÉRINE: Ah! comme il est bâti!

“Recevoir tout son bien d'où l'on attend le mal  
Et devenir heureux par la main d'un rival,”

says Mascarille in “L'Etourdi,” and the idea is exactly that which is acted upon by Louisa here. Isaac is to be made a cat's-paw of, and to defeat his own ends by his over-weening self-confidence. It is a common stratagem in both authors that two persons should dupe a third by causing him to do exactly the opposite of what he intends to do. We have had the examples of Don Jerome, turning out his own daughter and the parallel scenes in Molière. We may also compare the *dénouement* in “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,” where Monsieur Jourdain is quite willing that his daughter should marry “le fils du Grand Turc,” whilst



Monsieur de Porceaugnac is similarly misled by Sbrigani (Act I., Sc. 3). The idea, too, of saddling Antonio with a girl is exactly that tried by Sbrigani on Porceaugnac when several women claim him.

Act II. opens with a fine piece of dramatic irony, in which Sheridan excels. The two dupes express their own confidence in their powers, and their assurance that they, at least, cannot be cheated. "*La confiance d'une dupe est la chose du monde la plus comique.*" The scene in "*L'Etourdi*" (Act II., Sc. 2) conveys the same idea, as also does that in "*L'Avare*" (Act V., Sc. 3). The self-confidence of Sganarelle towards the end of "*L'Ecole des Maris*" is also similar. Don Jerome's opinions of his daughter remind us of those of M. de Sotenville in "*George Dandin*." There is, indeed, some similarity between Isaac and George Dandin. The relations in which these two stand to the fathers, and the contempt they meet with, give them a certain kinship, but, as we have seen, it is to Monsieur de Porceaugnac that we must look if we are to find anything more than a surface similarity between Isaac and a character of Molière's.

The love scene between Isaac and the Duenna, and the entrance of Carlos, reminds us of little, if anything, in Molière. It is somewhat to be wondered at that Molière should never have made use of this theme, so prolific in humour, of a man making love to the wrong person. It is true that in the "*Dépit Amoureux*" such was the case, but there the love-making does not take place on the stage, but is left to the imagination of the audience, and even then the situation has not the same element of the ludicrous. *Les Précieuses Ridicules* were, indeed, in the same dilemma, whilst *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* *thought* he was. The scene is original in Sheridan, and shows the dramatist at his best. It affords occasion for telling asides and for biting sarcasm. Isaac is somewhat taken aback by the ugliness of the Duenna, but is not proof against her flattery, and under its influence he himself "mollifies apace." Such is the effect also on Monsieur de Porceaugnac of the flattery of Sbrigani, whilst the havoc played on Monsieur Jourdain's purse by flattery needs no mention.

Yet Don Jerome is on the point of discovering the key to the enigma if he would but listen to what his son says—"It can't be my sister whom he has seen." But he is too obstinate, and brushes aside all attempt at arguing. Thus, also, does Sganarelle in "*L'Ecole des Maris*" defeat his own ends (Act III., Sc. 7). If he would but let his brother speak, all would be out, but, in his eagerness to entrap him, he will not let him say a word until he has himself got trapped.

Louisa uses Isaac for her own ends, just as Julie, or rather Julie's friends do in the case of Monsieur de Porceaugnac. Both lovers are outwitted by those they wish to marry, and, unknowingly,

further the interests of their rivals. Isaac, striving to "hamper" Antonio with Louisa, is just L'Etourdi doing all in his power to thwart his own chances of success. And when Antonio "resigns his pretensions" to the lady at Don Jerome's, the situation is identical with that in "*L'Ecole des Maris*" when Valère assures Sganarelle:—

"Où, où, votre mérite, à qui chacun se rend,  
Est à mes vœux, Monsieur, un obstacle trop grand,  
Et c'est folie à moi, dans mon ardeur fidèle,  
De prétendre avec vous à l'amour d'Isabelle"

("L'Ecole de Maris," Act II., Sc. 6).

For the audience, it is a piece of dramatic irony which is rendered all the more savoury by the self-satisfied conceit of the dupe. The situation is, indeed, one of the commonest to be found in dramatists—the schemer duped by means of his own schemes, and two people with whom the audience is in sympathy carrying out their designs under the very nose of a third person whose main object in the play is to thwart those very designs he is the means of bringing to a successful issue. It is a common scene, and yet ever fresh and full of new possibilities, and has been made great use of by our two dramatists. In practically every play we have such a situation, and we may cite as examples: "*L'Avare*," where the lovers tell each other their sentiments in the very presence of Harpagon; and "*The Rivals*," where Mrs. Malaprop is made the aider and abettor of the schemes of the "scoundrel Beverley." Such a scene is generally full of "double-entendres," conveying one meaning to the person being duped, and an entirely different meaning to the audience who are in the secret.

At the close of the second act we have mention of the dancers Isaac had paid for to celebrate his wedding, and whose 'capers' he still intends to see, although the elopement makes their presence unnecessary. The idea of masqueraders and of dancers is more French than English, and probably owes its origin here to the French plays which Sheridan had read.

The last act of the play contains the working out of what has gone before. Jerome at the outset is naturally mystified—as mystified, though not so horrified, as Oronte is when he learns his daughter Julie has eloped with Monsieur de Porceaugnac, and sees her pretence of love for him. The two situations are again identical. The daughter, who has at first refused to marry the man of her father's choice, seems now to be more eager for him than her father was before. The father is this time the dupe, and finds that his schemes have not been carried out as he had expected. We may compare for a similar scene the ending of "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," and "*L'Amour Médecin*." In each case the father consents to the marriage under a mistaken idea, and only when too late does he find out his mistake. We

are left to suppose by Molière that in the end he accepts the inevitable; in this play the reconciliation is more elaborately worked out. Again in "L'Ecole des Maris," the *dénouement* exemplifies the same idea, although it is not the father this time, but the lover, who is the dupe of his own folly. The words of Valère lead Sganarelle to a wrong conclusion, just as the letters in this scene mystify Don Jerome.

The song contained in this scene bears a strong resemblance in sentiment to that in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" (Act IV, Scene 1). We may indicate the resemblance by the following quotations.

Truth, they say, lies in a well,  
 Why, I vow I ne'er could see;  
 Let the water-drinkers tell,  
 There it always lay for me.  
 For when sparkling wine went round,  
 Never saw I falsehood's mask;  
 But still honest truth I found  
 In the bottom of each flask.

Laissons raisonner les sots  
 Sur le vrai bonheur de la vie;  
 Notre philosophie  
 Le met parmi les pots:  
 Les biens, le savoir et la gloire  
 N'ôtent point les soucis fâcheux;  
 Et ce n'est qu'à bien boire  
 Que l'on peut être heureux.

The anxieties of love have hurt the disposition of Ferdinand, as shown by his treatment of Lopez and of Isaac. A similar effect was produced on Valère in the "Dépit Amoureux," and his treatment of Mascarille (Act V., Scene 3) is such as Lopez receives at the hands of his master in this scene.

It is the irony of fate that Isaac should be the one to tell Ferdinand of the supposed escapade of his mistress. The mistake made by Ferdinand on receipt of Isaac's news is like that made by Lélie in "Sganarelle" when he returns from his journey. We have also that scene in "Les Fourberies de Scapin" (Act III., Sc. 3), where Zerbinette unwittingly lets Géronte into the secret, and occasions a similar outburst of anger. The part which Isaac plays in the hands of Ferdinand, and his cowardice, remind us of George Dandin and his dealings with his wife's lover. The latter, too, considers discretion the better part of valour, and, at the instigation of his father-in-law, apologises to his rival.

The convent scene of "The Duenna" is one which has no counterpart in the plays of Molière. Molière satirises many types, but his lash never falls upon his religion or its exponents.



Had it been otherwise, there must have been still greater trouble over the permission to allow his interment than there was. With Sheridan the case was different. He was not a Catholic himself, and considered it no sin to satirise the convents and the monks. But it is a playful satire, and leaves us in doubt whether Sheridan means us to take him seriously or not. The suggestion of bribery being rampant is conveyed by Clara's words, that Ferdinand and Antonio both gained admission by "potent gold." The scene of the room in the priory and the character of Father Paul are highly satirical, and, although Molière may satirise the "faux dévot," he never held the monks up to ridicule. We are led to wonder whether the scene is the result of Sheridan's own experience when his future wife and he ran away to a convent in France. We have, indeed, plenty of references to convents in Molière, but always with respect, and generally as the refuge of a lover in distress, or as the place where to get rid of a daughter who is in the way.

Ferdinand is still kept in error; this time by the quibbling, if not actual falsehood, of Clara. We are reminded of the mistakes and quarrels between lovers in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," "Le Tartuffe," "Le Dépit Amoureux," and "Sganarelle." The bribery of Father Paul recalls Sganarelle in "Le Médecin malgré lui," who is as easily mollified and as eager for the bribe. The humorous touch of the porter draining the glass of Father Paul, who says to him, "So you would have drunk it if there had been any left! Ah, glutton! glutton!" is like the farce in "Don Juan" (Act IV., Sc. 7), where Sganarelle is caught in the act of abstracting a portion from his master's plate and putting it in his mouth. "Ah! coquin que vous êtes!"

The entrance of Ferdinand and Clara, and the recriminations of the latter to all concerned, bring us back to the "Dépit Amoureux." Compare Act V., Sc. 7, with the words of Ferdinand to Clara, and the desire of both lovers, who consider themselves aggrieved, to fight. The words of Father Paul—"Did the man want to marry his own sister?" bring to mind the *dénouement* of L'Etourdi and of Don Garcie, where a lover finds out his relationship. The clearing up of the enigma, too, and the excuses of Ferdinand have everything in common with the "Dépit Amoureux," where Valère has been provoked into a similar state of fury, and is similarly desirous of proffering excuses to all whom he has miscalled (Act V., Sc. 8). We may also compare the following:—

CLARA : But swear never to be jealous again, and I'll forgive you.

FERD. : By all——

CLARA : There, that will do—you'll keep the oath just as well.

D. JUAN : Voulez-vous que je fasse des serments épouvantables? Que le Ciel——

CHARLOTTE : Mon Dieu, ne jurez point, je vous crois.

(“Don Juan,” Act II., Sc. 3).

The *dénouement* of “The Duenna” is in Sheridan’s best style of comedy. All the parties come together; the lovers are happily matched, and the villain of the piece discomfited. It is the happy ending common to the comedies of both dramatists, and the reconciliations complete the harmony of the whole. The ultimate fate of Isaac is left to the imagination of the audience, but his disgust and the efforts of the Duenna to make love to him recall the pretended affection of Julie for Monsieur de Porceaugnac, and his aversion to it. Isaac wishes now to disown his wife, but she, after a tirade of virulent abuse, informs him that she has a brother who wears a sword,—a fact on which the wedding in “Le Mariage Forcé” also depends. The ending of “The Duenna” is, however, still more similar to those of “L’Ecole des Femmes” and “L’Ecole des Maris.” Up to the very end, Arnolphe and Sganarelle, like Isaac, are surè of their position, and their discomfiture is all the more enjoyable to the audience on that account.

In conclusion, the Masqueraders enter and thus furnish a typically French ending.

A consideration of “The Duenna,” and its comparison with the plays of Molière, show us that the two dramatists have indeed many points in common. The intimate connection between “The Duenna” and “Le Sicilien” has been shown, and the scarcely less intimate connection between it and “L’Ecole des Maris.” These two, at least, Sheridan must have had in mind when he devised the plot of “The Duenna.” The points of contact between the characters of Isaac and of Monsieur de Porceaugnac have been shown to many, whether the one character is directly based on the other or not; whilst the reference of individual scenes to similar scenes in Molière, whilst individually they may prove nothing, collectively form a mass of evidence which it is difficult to set aside. Sheridan certainly did *not* sit down to write his plays with Molière in front of him. But he had read Molière extensively, and sometimes, in spite of himself, those “starts of recollection” obtrude themselves, and, in reading, we find our minds sent back to try to find the original in the French dramatist. However much similarity can be shown between the two, however, it must always be admitted that Sheridan is original in the treatment of his plot, and especially in his language. We have a wealth of humour and of pure comedy throughout his plays which is of Sheridan himself, and for which he is indebted to no one. His native genius was quite capable of concocting plots and scenes for himself, but that same retentive memory was sure, almost unconsciously, to reproduce some of what he had already read. And if he had



read little of this style of work, as he himself informs us, the more directly do his "starts of recollection" bear on what he has read, and of that little Molière is a great part. The very fear he expresses, that "Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams," shows us that his memory *was* of that sort which retains and tends to reproduce what it has once assimilated. And the fact that he naturally and inevitably turns to the same style of comedy as Molière is master of, convinces us that Molière must have had great attraction for him, and must have been one of his favourite authors. It is no rash assumption, then, that we put forward when we say that some plays and characters are based on similar ones of Molière, whilst many scenes, incidents, and sentiments throughout his plays are directly traceable to Molière.

## CHAPTER II.

## "THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

Genest says: "Plautus, in his *Trinummus*, line 180, would furnish a very pat motto for this play:—

'Quod si exquiratur usque ab stirpe auctoritas,  
Unde quicquid auditum dicant, nisi id appareat,  
Famigatorum res sit cum damno et malo;  
Hoc ita si fiat, publico fiat bono.  
Pauci sint faxim, qui sciant quod nesciunt;  
Occlusioremque habeant stultiloquentiam.'

This is just what Sir Peter says in the second Act."

The very name of Sheridan's masterpiece brings us directly back to Molière and reminds us of the titles "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" and "*L'Ecole des Maris*." It is not an accidental similarity, but a direct evidence of the influence Molière has had throughout on Sheridan. It is one of those "starts of recollection" which suggests the title to Sheridan as being as appropriate to his own play as it is to those of Molière.

Taking a broad general view of "*The School for Scandal*," we find that it consists of the same plot of thwarted love finally victorious. That plot, however, is in this case subordinate to the doings of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, who are the foremost figures on the stage. But the love plot *is* prominently there—the ward is being forced by her guardian to a distasteful marriage, and is pestered by the attentions of an unwelcome suitor, who is finally routed and has his place filled by the man of the lady's choice. There are undercurrents and by-plots which give the play originality and character, but the love interest common to all the comedies of the two dramatists is prominently there.

The name of the play is sufficient to send us to Molière's "*Le Misanthrope*" to see what resemblance the one bears to the other. "*The School for Scandal*" exists with Molière, as highly developed and as virulent as with Sheridan. There is a similarity in the treatment of the outstanding scandal scenes of the two plays, and to whatever other sources Sheridan may be indebted for this play, he is certainly and obviously indebted to "*Le Misanthrope*." There is no lack of originality in Sheridan's play, and there can be no question of plagiarism, but the similarity that can be shown between the two leaves no room for doubt that the one suggested the other. We shall have to examine the two more in detail as the different scenes occur, and show the points of resemblance more fully.

As for the outstanding characters of the play, the one which perhaps leaves most impression is that of Joseph Surface. We are told by Mr. Sanders that Joseph Surface resembles Tartuffe in being a hypocrite but in nothing more. That is a general assertion which requires to be examined more fully before it is either accepted or rejected.

There is an essential difference between the two plays in that the character of the impostor in "The School for Scandal" is more subsidiary than it is in Molière's play. In the latter the whole action turns around the 'faux dévot,' and Tartuffe is continually before our eyes either as a participator in each scene or as the agent whose machinations give rise to each scene. Not so in "The School for Scandal." There we have scenes of pure humour which have got nothing to do with Joseph Surface or his hypocritical sentimentality. Sheridan has drawn his character from Molière, but he has inserted it in his play, as an integral part of the play, indeed, but not as the one character which awakens our interest and arouses our antipathy. To the reader of "Le Tartuffe," one feeling is dominant throughout—that of repugnance for the character of the Impostor. He feels at the same time pity for Marianne, amusement at Dorinne, surprise at Orgon, but his attention is never really distracted from Tartuffe, and every line of the play owes its existence to that character.

In "The School for Scandal" we have scenes which are entirely independent of Joseph Surface, important though his character be in the play, and in which the attention of the reader is distracted from his whining sentimentality and turned to scenes of freer humour. Such scenes are those in which Lady Sneerwell's friends bandy scandal, that of the selling of the family pictures in Charles Surface's house, etc. It may be said, then, that "The School for Scandal" has in it more humour and a freer atmosphere. The characters and their interests are more varied, the plot is more complex, and the scenes are worked out with greater ingenuity. How far, then, can it be said that "The School for Scandal" is based upon "Le Tartuffe"? This may be distinctly stated at the outset: that Tartuffe is the prototype of Joseph Surface. Sheridan has not followed his original too closely—he has not simply taken Tartuffe from the pages of Molière and inserted him in his own play. We have not now the man who represents himself as entirely devoted to religion, as despising all things temporal for things eternal, as spending his days in prayer and fasting. But we have here what serves the purpose better for the society into which Sheridan introduces his Impostor—the man of sentimentality who poses as a model to the young men of the age, and from whose mouth come maxims of the most perfect morality. The character of the one is just as despicable as that of the other, and both are in the end exposed in their true colours after they have run their race for some time. Both, too, play upon the

feelings of an easily deluded old man, from whom they hope to obtain an advantageous match ; both attempt to seduce the wives of their matrimonial patrons, and both are by these means shown up in their true characters.

We have, then, Orgon, blinded by the hypocrisy of Tartuffe, and willing to force his daughter Marianne to a marriage with him, in order that Tartuffe may be allied to his family. We have similarly, Sir Peter Teazle, blinded by the hypocrisy of Joseph Surface, and willing to force his ward Maria to a marriage with him. In respect of the threatened blight of their most cherished hopes, Valère may be compared with Charles Surface, but in no other respect. The method of exposure of the two impostors is precisely similar, although in the one case the *dénouement* is natural and unexpected, whilst in the other it is sought for, and Tartuffe is caught in a trap. Both dramatists, however, ring the changes on precisely the same feelings, and there is remarkable similarity between the sentiments of the two men when pressing their suits before their patrons' wives. Compare Joseph Surface, when he confesses the presence of the "little French milliner" to Sir Peter: "Though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either!" and the sentiment of Tartuffe: "Ah! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme."

As for the other characters in general outline, we can look upon Sir Peter as a Cocu Imaginaire, on Lady Teazle as one reared in L'Ecole des Femmes, but, having graduated, forsaking the austere traditions of her training, and turning her back on all that her former life contained, to give herself up to the pleasures of her new state. She is the heroine of "Le Mariage Forcé"—responsible to no one after she is married, and extravagant of her husband's money. The others are not so nearly related to characters of Molière, although we can often find in them, too, points which send us back to Molière in search of an original.

The confidential scene at the beginning throws some light upon the characters of two who play an important part in the under-currents of the play. Lady Sneerwell has been wounded herself in the early part of life, and thus resembles Arsinoé of "Le Misanthrope," who, as depicted by Célimène, has as her sole aim the reducing of others to the state of prudery in which she herself exists. Her intrigues and intervention with letters are also Arsinoé-like ; and her misplaced and rejected love recall that personage still more forcibly. The position of Snake is somewhat unusual in the comedies, being considerably superior to that of the confidential valets of Molière, and rather resembling Carlos in "The Duenna."

Joseph Surface's *début* serves to show the audience what sort



of man he is, and prepares them for much of the dramatic irony which occurs throughout the play. Maria then enters, fleeing from her "disagreeable lover," as the Countess has to do in "Don Garcie de Navarre," though in the latter case with more reason and in dread of greater consequences. The scene which follows and the discussion by the scandal-mongers on scandal recalls "Le Misanthrope," when Célimène is taxed by Alceste for her satirical comments upon her acquaintances (Act II., Sc. 5).

*Act I., Sc. 2.*—Sir Peter is very much in the position of George Dandin, and his opening soliloquy is similar to his, with this difference that, whereas he married "une femme demoiselle," it is to his wife's youth that Sir Peter attributes all his troubles. The difference is not great, and the troubles are similar. Compare:—

GEORGE DANDIN: "George Dandin, George Dandin, vous avez fait une sottise la plus grande du monde. Ma maison m'est effroyable maintenant, et je n'y rentre point sans y trouver quelque chagrin."

SIR PETER: "When an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves—no—the crime carries its punishment along with it."

GEORGE DANDIN: "Lorsqu'on a, comme moi, épousé une méchante femme, le meilleur parti qu'on puisse prendre, c'est de s'aller jeter dans l'eau la tête la première."

He has evidently chosen his wife with the care of Arnolphe in "L'Ecole des Femmes," "a girl bred wholly in the country," and has been similarly disappointed in the result. Both "chose with caution," and both found themselves in the end unfortunate in their choice. The end, indeed, is more in favour of Sir Peter than of Arnolphe, just as the beginning is different in that Sir Peter is already married, whereas Arnolphe is but contemplating that step. There is more development in Molière's play than in Sheridan's. In "L'Ecole des Femmes," the gradual growth of character and knowledge in Célie is shown us, whereas in Sheridan's play Lady Teazle is already the accomplished society woman. She is what the heroine of "Le Mariage Forcé" would be if the play did not end with her marriage. Indeed, we might imagine Sheridan to have read that play, and to have thence conceived the idea of Lady Teazle. The sentiments expressed by the two are similar as regards marriage, and Sganarelle also wishes to choose with caution, although, in his case, he finds out his mistake early, but not early enough.

The situation of husband and wife in disagreement is one that is not very common in Molière. We have, of course, "Le Cocu Imaginaire," and Sganarelle in "Le Médecin malgré lui"—but these bear little or no resemblance to Sir Peter. We have

lovers' quarrels, but these again can scarcely be likened to the quarrelling of a married pair. The quarrel scene here is full of humorous repartee of a kind which is seldom found in Molière. The play to which we must refer again for this scene is "George Dandin." The situations are again fairly similar, and the replies which Lady Teazle throws at her husband are of practically the same substance as those of Angélique: "M'avez-vous, avant le mariage, demandé mon consentement, et si je voulais bien de vous? Vous n'avez consulté pour cela que mon père et ma mère; ce sont eux proprement qui vous ont épousé. . . . Pour moi, . . . je prétends n'être point obligée à me soumettre en esclave à vos volontés, et je veux jouir, s'il vous plaît, de quelque nombre de beaux jours que m'offre la jeunesse, prendre les douces libertés que l'âge me permet, voir un peu le beau monde, et goûter le plaisir de m'ouïr dire des douceurs."

The sentiment which each wife acts upon is similar, though the motive is somewhat different. The expostulations of Dandin and those of Sir Peter are equally unavailing, whilst the wife of each openly declares her sentiments to be in direct opposition to those of her husband. "Moi, les chasser? et par quelle raison? Je ne me scandalise point qu'on me trouve bien faite, et cela me fait du plaisir."

From these examples it can scarcely be said that the character of Sir Peter is based on that of George Dandin, although there is a pronounced similarity between the two and in the sentiments they express. The most that can be said is that a similar idea has occurred to each dramatist, and each has worked it out on similar lines. Sir Peter, however, continues to love his wife through it all, thereby differing from George Dandin and rather resembling Arnolphe.

The scandal scenes have been traced to other sources than "Le Misanthrope," such as Wycherley's "Plain Dealer" and Congreve's "Double Dealer," just as the character of Joseph Surface has been referred to the Malvil of Arthur Murphy's "Know your own Mind." It is not our purpose here to examine the claims of each of these, but to show how far, in all probability, Sheridan draws upon Molière for his ideas; and critics are unanimous in the view that the scandal scenes here are directly influenced by "Le Misanthrope." It may certainly be that many of the points of contact between this play and Molière came to Sheridan by way of Congreve's "Double Dealer," where the similarity of certain scenes to scenes in "Le Misanthrope" and "Tartuffe" has been shown by Mr. Kerby ("Molière and the Restoration Comedy in England.") The methods of treatment in "The School for Scandal" and in "Le Misanthrope" are identical, but there is this striking difference, that whereas in "Le Misanthrope" character is attacked, in "The School for Scandal" it is generally the appearance which is made the subject of raillery.

This is more marked in the second scandal scene (Act II., Sc. 2), where, save for Mrs. Candour's leading statements anent the good nature of Mrs. Pursy, the censoriousness of Miss Sallow and Mrs. Ogle's pretensions to be critical on beauty, with the remark upon Lady Stucco's sentiment, we find the personal appearance discussed rather than the mental habits or character as in "*Le Misanthrope*." As for the first scandal scene (Act I., Sc. 1) it consists more of the tittle-tattle of a gossiping band of idlers, and not so much of a critical, though disparaging, analysis of character as we have in Célimène's remarks. In other words, Lady Sneerwell's band give us a good idea of the personal appearance of those they discuss, Célimène's of the type of mind. We could form a mental picture of Mrs. Ogle, but we know the mental vagaries of Damis.

The discussion between Joseph Surface, Maria, and Lady Sneerwell of the character of Mrs. Candour, just before that lady's entrance, which serves the purpose of giving the audience the cue, has more than one parallel in Molière. In "*Le Misanthrope*," again (Act III., Sc. 3), Célimène similarly gives Acaste a description of Arsinoé's character, just before the latter enters, but greets her warmly when she does appear. Similarly, in "*La Critique*," Elise carries her criticism of the approaching Climène to such a point as to make Uranie fear it may be overheard (Sc. 2).

Sir Peter's aside on his entrance—"Mercy on me, here is the whole set!—a character dead at every word, I suppose"—is like the aside of Eliante to Philinte:—

"Ce début n'est pas mal, et contre le prochain

La conversation prend un assez bon train."

Finally, Sir Peter breaks in in much the same way as does Alceste, and puts a stop to the scandal-mongering, suffering the jibes and jeers of the assembled company. Sir Peter comes out of the affair better than Alceste, who is no match for the satire of Célimène.

*Act II., Sc. 2.*—Sheridan has here a hit at affectation of cleverness, as Molière has frequently. The ability, so-called, of Sir Benjamin at rhymes and charades recalls the similar passages in "*Les Femmes Savantes*" and in "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*." Molière, however, carries the satire further than Sheridan, and whilst the latter merely holds a clown up to ridicule, the former is intent upon satirising an exaggerated example of a really existing class. *Les Précieuses* are a product of modern civilization, and are nowhere more severely dealt with than by Molière. Sheridan is here satirical, only in that he represents this ignorant booby Sir Benjamin and his "odious uncle" Crabtree as being well received in this so-called smart set. The lucubrations of Trissotin, of Mascarille, in "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," and of Monsieur Tibaudier in "*La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*," are similarly idiotic and receive more fulsome flattery. Sir Benjamin's



previously expressed opinion—"To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print"—recalls also "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*."

MADÉLON: J'en retiens un exemplaire au moins, si vous le faites imprimer.

MASCARILLE: Cela est au-dessous de ma condition; mais je le fais seulement pour donner à gagner aux libraires qui me persécutent.

The position of Joseph, making love to Maria and pretending to be the lover of Lady Teazle, is, of course, Tartuffe, with the essential difference that in the present case Lady Teazle to a certain extent encourages his advances, and is ignorant of his other pretensions. These two differences must make us chary of setting too great value on the interdependence of these two characters. The same situation is seen in "*Les Femmes Savantes*."

*Act II., Sc. 3.*—The meeting of Sir Oliver and Sir Peter is like the meeting of old friends in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," "*L'Avare*," and "*L'Ecole des Femmes*." Sir Oliver's opinions are somewhat reminiscent of Alceste's.

SIR OLIVER: "He has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him! Psha! Then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue."

ALCESTE: "Je hais tous les hommes,  
Les uns parcequ'ils sont méchants et malfaisants,  
Et les autres pour être aux méchants complaisants,  
Et n'avoir pas pour eux ces haines vigoureuses  
Que doit donner le vice aux âmes vertueuses."

*Act III., Sc. 1.*—Sir Peter's troubles with his ward are similar to those of numerous characters in Molière—in fact, it is on such obstinacy in love that the plot of the comedies most frequently turns. His relations to Lady Teazle are more unusual, and the amusing scene in which he fails to keep on good terms with his helpmate has, as counterpart in Molière, only the similar scene in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," where Arnolphe strives to ingratiate himself with Agnès, and similarly fails. The scene between Arnolphe and Agnès (*Act V., Sc. 4*) is, on the whole, similar, although differing in detail. Sir Peter and Arnolphe both change from their ingratiating manner to one of abuse, when they find their efforts at friendliness rebutted, and each parts from his lady on worse terms than before, but still very much in love. Quarrels between lovers are naturally different, and end differently. Sir Peter's state of mind with regard to his wife is like that of Alceste with regard to Célimène in "*Le Misanthrope*," when he explains—

"Morbleu! Faut-il que je vous aime!" (*Act II., Sc. 1*).

Both are in the throes of a quarrel, and both love, whilst wishing to be free from the bonds of love—love against which they



struggle and cannot free themselves. Each is scoffed at to his face by his lady, and in the wordy combat comes out the worse. But the ill-humour of Alceste and of Sir Peter are of different kinds. Sir Peter's is the crabbedness of age, Alceste's is a perverted morbidness. The quarrel scene between George Dandin and his wife is different, in that Dandin does not attempt to conciliate his wife, but similar in that he expresses the same regret at having married that Sir Peter does, and is similarly tormented by suspicions of his wife. In this scene also the sentiments expressed by Angélique with regard to her marriage, and her reasons for it, are similar to those of Lady Teazle. Compare also the sentiments of Dorimène in "*Le Mariage Forcé*" (Sc. 2), which are precisely those of Lady Teazle after marriage. Compare—

LADY TEAZLE: "I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter; indeed, you always gave the provocation."

ANGÉLIQUE: "Mais aussi c'est lui qui commence toujours à . . ."

( "*La Jalousie du Barbouillé.*" )

in a scene which was afterwards incorporated in "*George Dandin.*"

*Act III., Sc. 2.*—Trip is not unlike many of the servants in Molière. He is the shadow of his master, and resembles Tartuffe's servant in his likeness to his master. He is Don Juan's Sganarelle in that his wages are hopelessly in arrears, and we are left to suppose that if we had more of him he would turn out a Scapin or a Mascarille—a fourbe! Rowley's pleas for Charles Surface are as those of Scapin for Octave when he tries to palliate what seems to the father an unforgivable offence (*Act I., Sc. 4*).

*Act III., Sc. 3.*—A drinking scene is not a common one in Molière. We have the banquet in the house of Monsieur Jourdain, and the drinking song there (*Act IV., Sc. 1*) is more comparable, in sentiment at least, to the songs of Don Jerome in "*The Duenna.*" There is some dramatic irony here in Sheridan's best style, and the situation of Sir Oliver being taken for other than he is, both here with Charles and later with Joseph, and thus hearing certain things about himself that would not be said to his face, reminds us of the scene in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin,*" when Gêronte is told his own character by Zerbinette, under the impression that he is someone else (*Act III., Sc. 3*). It recalls also Arnolphe in "*L'Ecole des Femmes.*"

*Act IV., Sc. 1.*—We have then the auction scene which gives the author abundant scope for the most brilliant sallies of wit. We shall take here the character of Moses and the reflections upon usury in general, and refer them in the first place to "*L'Avare.*" There also we have exorbitant interest demanded by Harpagon—unwittingly from his son—and there also the goods to be sold catalogued, perhaps in a more austere way than here,

but in a way whose very austerity is humorous. The similarity between the methods of usurers in the two plays is well exemplified by the following extracts:—

LA FLÈCHE: “Mais, comme le dit prêteur n’a pas chez lui la somme dont il est question, et que pour faire plaisir à l’emprunteur il est contraint lui-même de l’emprunter d’un autre sur le pied du denier cinq, il conviendra que ledit premier emprunteur paye cet intérêt, sans préjudice du reste, attendu que ce n’est que pour l’obliger que ledit prêteur s’engage à cet emprunt.”

CLÉANTE: “Comment diable! Quel juif, quel arabe est-ce là? C’est plus qu’au denier quatre.”  
 (“L’Avare,” Act II., Sc. 1).

SIR OLIVER: I’ll answer for’t. I’ll not be wanting in that. I’ll ask him eight or ten per cent. on the loan, at least.

MOSES: If you ask him no more than that, you’ll be discovered immediately.

SIR OLIVER: Hey! What, the plague! how much then?

MOSES: That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply you should require only forty or fifty per cent.; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

SIR PETER: A good honest trade you’re learning, Sir Oliver!

SIR OLIVER: Truly I think so—and not unprofitable.

MOSES: Then, you know, you haven’t the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of a friend.

SIR OLIVER: Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

MOSES: And your friend is an unconscionable dog, but you can’t help that.

SIR OLIVER: My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

MOSES: Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

(“School for Scandal,” Act III., Sc. 1).

The resemblance is very marked here, and the character of Maître Simon as go-between is exactly that of Moses. The words of Cléante also are precisely that of Charles when he introduces himself to the supposed Premium: “J’ai besoin d’argent, et il faut bien que je consente à tout.”

CHARLES SURFACE: “I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money; you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who has got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent. sooner than not

have it! and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it."

In "L'Avare" the *dénouement* is quicker, and is not to the advantage of Cléante as it is to that of Charles here, but there are distinct signs of similarity in the two cases. Cléante, indeed, has much in common with Charles Surface. He is poor, pestered by duns, and resorts to gaming in order to supply himself with clothes. But his circumstances are somewhat different, and he does not seem to have sunk so far as Charles, whilst his love affairs run on different lines and he has for a rival, not a brother, but a father. With these differences, however, their positions are fairly similar. But Charles is represented in a somewhat better light than is Cléante. He is not merely a wild youth, but a generous youth—one engaged in sowing his wild oats, but with no ill or malice in his heart. The character of Cléante does not touch us by his generosity, although it moves us to pity for his love affairs. Poverty is, of course, a continual drawback to the smooth-working of love in the comedies, but the character of Charles is more distinctive than most.

*Act IV., Sc. 3.* The scene where Joseph Surface attempts the honour of Lady Teazle is reminiscent of "Le Tartuffe." There is, of course, the essential difference that in "Le Tartuffe" the wife of Orgon has no intention or inclination to yield to the blandishments of the 'faux dévot,' and the scene is simply a plot laid for the entrapping of that individual. We are led to suppose, on the other hand, that Lady Teazle, but for the intervention that took place, would have fallen a victim to Joseph's machinations. The only other scene in Molière which is remotely similar is that in "George Dandin," where Angélique and her lover in the garden are overheard by Dandin himself. The entrance of Sir Peter is an unexpected contretemps, which makes the situation rich in humour and capable of much development. He comes in like Arnolphe to Agnès, all unknowing of what has been taking place, and utters practically the same words.

SIR PETER: "Ay, ever improving himself! Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface——"

ARNOLPHE: "La besogne à la main! c'est un bon témoignage."

His entrance, however, serves to make the scene more like that in "Le Tartuffe," save that now it is the wife who is in hiding and not the husband, whilst the seducer is the one who knows the real situation and the husband is in the dark. Thus these scenes differ much in detail, and lead by different roads to the same result. But it is to the same result they lead—the unmasking of the traitor and the opening of the eyes of the blinded husband to his real enemy. And we may safely assume, in spite of these discrepancies in detail, that Sheridan had Tartuffe in his mind, and in working out the plot made it original by making the



development original. The resemblance between the two characters is too great to be neglected. We cannot assume that there is no connection, but we must admit that the connection is too general to admit of decided proof.

The contretemps of two lovers being surprised seems to have been more affected by Sheridan than by Molière. We have it again in "St. Patrick's Day," when Justice Credulous comes unexpectedly upon Laura and Humphrey Hum, and in "The Rivals," when Mrs. Malaprop all but catches 'Beverley' and Lydia. In Molière we can point for such a scene only to "George Dandin," and to a faint echo of resemblance in 'Le Malade Imaginaire.' We have, indeed, often the situation of two lovers coming together under the eyes of the one who desires to keep them apart, and this situation of dramatic irony seems to be preferred by Molière. There is, of course, the supposed catching of his wife by Sganarelle and of Sgaranelle by his wife, whilst Don Juan furnishes similar traits. But as a rule this situation is not so much affected by Molière as by Sheridan. The scene gives greater scope for dramatic irony also, in which again Sheridan has indulged to a greater extent than Molière. In scarcely any of his plays are we unable to point to it in a very marked degree, whereas in Molière it is less common.

The scene develops rapidly and Joseph becomes more and more immeshed in difficulties. His situation when Charles is with him—and he has two listeners in his room—has no parallel in Molière, and the unearthing of Sir Peter and the unveiling of Lady Teazle are also scenes which are as original as they are brilliant. These are the children of Sheridan's own brain, inventions of his own genius, and in them we find no slightest trace of those "starts of recollection" which we can see in other places. We can only indicate Congreve's "Double Dealer" for a similar scene. Sir Peter's enlightenment is as complete as Orgon's.

JOSEPH SURFACE: "Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter.  
Heaven knows——"

SIR PETER: "That you are a villain! and so I leave  
you to your conscience."

ORGON: "Voilà, je vous l'avoue, un abominable  
homme."

TARTUFFE: "Quoi! vous croyez——"

ORGON: "Allons, point de bruit, je vous prie,  
Dénichons de céans, et sans céré-  
monie."

TARTUFFE: "Mon dessein——"

ORGON: "Ces discours ne sont plus de saison;  
Il faut, tout sur-le-champ, sortir de la maison."

*Act V., Sc. 1.*—We have compared the character of Joseph Surface with that of Le Tartuffe, in so far as both are deceitful

hypocrites. The character of Joseph is more intricate than that of *Le Tartuffe*, and is shown to us under more varied aspects. Here we have him in the character of a plausible miser trying to win the reputation for charity without incurring the expense of it. His frame of mind here, when he is being pestered by undesirable visits, reminds us of that of Don Juan, who, after the visit of Monsieur Dimanche, had to undergo a most unpleasant interview with his father, followed by another with Elvire. This scene is, indeed, strangely reminiscent of Don Juan throughout. Not that we can compare Don Juan with Joseph Surface to any great extent. Joseph is, indeed, as great a scoundrel as Don Juan, and has a similar disregard for the feelings of others in his love affairs. He, too, would pursue two women at once, but his procedure is not one of such open villainy as is that of Don Juan. Only towards the end does Don Juan turn hypocrite to serve his own purposes and to cloak his nefarious designs with the cloak of religious piety. "*L'hypocrisie est une vice à la mode*," he says as he adopts it, and his speech on hypocrisy (Act V., Sc. 3) is as good satire as there is in Molière. It would be strange, indeed, if Molière, who looks out upon the world, and on the doings of men, did not find more than once occasion to satirise that most common of vices. And it would be equally strange if a dramatist who had read Molière, and evidently copied him to a certain extent, did not find the character of a hypocrite a congenial one to include in his plays. There is more than a surface resemblance between Don Juan and Joseph Surface. The sentiment—"J'ai le secret de les renvoyer satisfaits sans leur donner un double," applied to duns, is that of Joseph Surface applied to beggars. "And there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense." The secret is in both cases identical, and exemplified in scenes which resemble each other closely. The hypocritical politeness of Joseph to the supposed Stanley is similar to the exaggerated politeness of Don Juan to Monsieur Dimanche (Act IV., Sc. 3). Even in details the resemblance is very close. The unnecessary entreating of the visitor to be seated, the smooth-tongued flattery of him during the interview, and cool brushing aside of the real purposes of his visit, and finally practically the turning out of the unpleasant visitor, "William, be ready to open the door," is as effective a hint as Don Juan's, "Allons, vite un flambeau pour conduire Monsieur Dimanche, et que quatre ou cinq de mes gens prennent des mousquetons pour l'escorter."

The fact that the visitor in the one case is a creditor, and in the other a poor relation, makes no difference, for the object of the call is the same—to extract money from one who refuses to give it.

We may mention at this point also the resemblance that

exists between Sganarelle and his relations with Dimanche, and Trip and his relations with Moses. In each case the servant copies his master's vices, and has the same creditors as his master, and in each play the creditor who comes to have dealings with the master has also dealings with the servant *en passant*. Trip wishes to borrow money from Moses, and is evidently not new at the game; whilst Sganarelle has already been borrowing from Dimanche, and tries to employ the same tactics as his master to get rid of his dun.

The trick whereby Sir Oliver gets to know the real character of his nephew reminds us of the devices of some of Molière's characters. Both Joseph and Charles show themselves in their true colours as completely as does Scapin in the famous scene between him and Léandre (Act II., Sc. 3). Le Malade Imaginaire pretends to be dead, and thus discovers the true character of his wife and of his daughter. The idea of testing a character by some means which, meant to deceive them at first, puts them in a position of showing their good or bad points, is an old one, and the devices used are many. We are instantly reminded of Faulkland's morbid eagerness to get at the true sentiments of Julia in "The Rivals," and, of course, we have again Orgon laying a plot for the entrapping of Tartuffe, and the similar showing up of Trissotin in "Les Femmes Savantes."

The different accounts given by the scandal-mongers of the affair between Lady Teazle and Joseph Surface bear some slight resemblance to the complications in "Sganarelle," but in detail are not to be paralleled in Molière. When they insist upon taking Sir Oliver for a doctor, however, we instantly revert to "Le Médecin Malgré lui" for a similar scene.

"I am to thank you for my degree," says Sir Oliver.

"Ils m'ont fait médecin malgré mes dents," says Sganarelle. Sganarelle's reference to school, too, "Jusqu'en sixième" (Act III., Sc. 1), recalls the reference to Eton made by Crabtree.

Sir Peter in his anger, thrusting the scandal-mongers out of his house, acts as does Gorgibus in "Les Précieuses Ridicules," when he finds his daughter and his niece befooled by the false marquis and viscount, whilst his reflections on his position, and on the ridicule he expects to be the subject of, are similar to those of Sganarelle and of George Dandin.

In his forgiveness of his wife and reconciliation to her, Sir Peter rises a point superior to George Dandin, and shows a spirit of leniency not often met with in the comedies between husband and wife.

Joseph and Lady Sneerwell are still leagued together to make mischief—Tartuffe with an ally—and like Tartuffe they play their cards to the end, which brings about their utter discomfiture. Everything conspires against them in the end more naturally than against Tartuffe. There the *dénouement* is produced more by a



*deus ex machina*; here the story winds itself round until the meshes enclose the conspirators and leave them no room for escape. The *dénouement* is in both cases in the true style of comedy, representing the triumph of true love and virtue over difficulties and villainy.

To sum up in general outline, it has been shown how Joseph Surface resembles Tartuffe closely, how Sir Peter is to a certain extent George Dandin, whilst Lady Teazle shows the character of Agnès in "L'Ecole des Femmes" and of Dorimène in "Le Mariage Forcé." But the greatest point of contact with Molière, so far as this play is concerned, lies in the similarity that can be shown between the "scandal scenes" contained in it, and that in "Le Misanthrope." In this case it is no mere similarity; it is a case of one play being based upon another, and a study of these scandal scenes shows that undoubtedly Sheridan had a very fresh recollection of Molière, when he was writing, if he had not actually Molière open in front of him. This fact alone is evidence in itself of Sheridan's debt to Molière, and makes it all the more apparent that those points of similarity which we have shown between the two authors are not accidental, but are actually due to those "starts of recollection" which came to Sheridan from the fact that he had read Molière and read him closely. Sometimes we have to deal with mere "starts of recollection," and sometimes, as here, with pieces actually based upon Molière as a model. Not that there is the slightest hint of plagiarism in this or in any other case. Molière serves as a model, and Sheridan re-casts the material to suit his own purpose and invests it with the buoyant humour peculiar to himself.

Apart from "Le Tartuffe" and "Le Misanthrope," the resemblances we have shown are numerous, and fall for the most part into the class of similarities which can be pointed to again as affording no individual proof, but as furnishing proof in the aggregate of Sheridan's debt to Molière.

## CHAPTER III.

**"ST. PATRICK'S DAY."**

"St. Patrick's Day" is a bright little farce, obviously founded on Molière. Of Molière in the original Sheridan knew probably little, for his acquaintance with the French language was very limited. . . . But it is obvious that he must have studied the great French dramatist, notably his "*Ecole des Femmes*," in some translation, when he rattled off "St. Patrick's Day." (Sanders).

In more respects than one this off-hand piece of criticism can scarcely be accepted as final. The evidence adduced by Mr. Sanders that Sheridan's "acquaintance with the French language was very limited"—namely, his bad pronunciation—is not at all convincing, for his reading acquaintance might have been very extensive at a time when the study of French was not conducted on the methods of to-day. It seems impossible that Sheridan could have entered so thoroughly into the spirit of the French dramatist and imbibed his ideas so well had he not had direct access to his plays through the medium of the language they are written in. At anyrate, until we have proof that his acquaintance with French *was* small—and the occasional French scattered throughout his plays is almost proof to the contrary—we must refuse to believe that he knew Molière only through translations.

Again, the dictum that "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" is mostly responsible for "St. Patrick's Day" is evidently not founded on fact, as we hope to be able to show in what follows. There is not so much similarity to be shown between this play and "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" as there is between it and some other of the plays of Molière. Similarities between these two plays are doubtless frequent, but not more frequent than between "St. Patrick's Day" and, say, "*Le Malade Imaginaire*."

The situation is the usual one of a love affair which is displeasing to the father, and which he is determined to stop, and the dénouement represents the triumph of love by stratagem and the final reconciliation of all parties. The characters and scenes composing the play are quite original, although similar in many respects to those of Molière, and the play is, as usual, full of the buoyant wit peculiar to Sheridan. There is nothing original in the plot itself. It indeed is simply that more or less of the great bulk—of almost every one—of the comedies we are considering. It now remains to be seen how far the development of this plot



is original, and how much of it Sheridan owes to his acquaintance with Molière.

The opening scene is essentially English. The soldiers grumbling about the usage they receive in their inns recall nothing in Molière, save that the solecisms recall similar ones made by the peasants who find a place in Molière's comedies, notably in "Don Juan" and in "Le Médecin malgré lui." The sentiment, "'Tis very hard these poor fellows should scarcely have bread from the soil they would die to defend," is evidently Sheridan's, and is remarkable as a patriotic sentiment which does not often find a place in these comedies. Fond as Molière is of the peasantry, and generally of those in humble stations, he is not given to thus taking up the cudgels on their behalf.

We have now the entrance of the only doctor, save Probe, to be found in Sheridan—one who seems from his description to combine the duties of doctor and apothecary. It would be incomplete if one who had based his plays so largely upon Molière had not had something to say about doctors, but, as a matter of fact, Sheridan has very little to say about them. The bitter satire found so often on the medical profession in Molière finds no echo in Sheridan. Dr. Rosy is here rather a caricature, but in what he says and in what he does there is no attack upon the profession to which he belongs. Evidently, then, Sheridan did not share Molière's antipathy to that profession. If we search his plays, we find practically only one sarcastic reference to doctors and their art (unless we include "Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice, *and kills characters no longer*"), and that in the play which is not to be counted as Sheridan's own ("A Trip to Scarborough," Act III., Sc. 2).

The lieutenant, then, wishes to carry off Lauretta, and his expression "hang fortune!" puts him in the best light of a hero—one who is no fortune-hunter, but who is urged on by love itself. In that respect we can compare him with the many heroes in Molière who are disinterested as far as money is concerned, *e.g.*, "L'Etourdi," those in "Les Fourberies de Scapin," and in "Le Sicilien," and are in strong contrast to such as Le Tartuffe, Trissotin, and Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, whose one aim is the dowry they expect.

The part that Dr. Rosy, the friend of the Justice, plays in aiding the love affairs of the lieutenant recalls the uncles of the lovers in "Le Tartuffe," in "Les Femmes Savantes," and in "Le Malade Imaginaire." The part that Dr. Rosy plays as aider and abettor is, however, more prominent and more successful than that of the other cases. When he has had fits of moralising, so exasperating to the lieutenant, he is strangely reminiscent of the apothecary in "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac" (Act I., Sc. 5), and in comparing him with L'Apothicaire we must

note that he once refers to himself as an apothecary, and is once so called by the lieutenant. Molière's apothecary is certainly more lugubrious, and has no cheerfulness to relieve the sombre turn of his mind, whilst Dr. Rosy is only occasionally given to dismal reflections. His reflections, too, are more general and deal with life as a whole, but when he talks of "poor Dolly" and gives a description of her, he approaches in sentiment with regard to her and his profession very near to the sentiments of L'Apothicaire with regard to his children and the medical profession. But whilst the sayings of L'Apothicaire are of the nature of a satire upon medicine, the reflections of the doctor are entirely harmless and serve the purpose of caricaturing himself, rather than of casting ridicule upon any profession or individual. The sentiments of the doctor, "Flesh is grass. We must all die," etc., and (Act II. Sc. 4), "We must all go, sooner or later—high and low—Death's a debt; his *mandamus* binds us all alike—no bail, no demurrer," recalls those of Anselme in "L'Etourdi" (Act II., Sc. 3).

ANSELME : Mais quoi ! cher Lélie, enfin il était homme.  
On n'a point pour la mort de dispense de Rome.

LÉLIE : Ah !

ANSELME : Sans leur dire gare elle abat les humains,  
Et contre eux de tout temps a de mauvais desseins.

LÉLIE : Ah !

ANSELME : Ce fier animal, pour toutes les prières,  
Ne perdrait pas un coup de ses dents meurtrières;  
Tout le monde y passe.

We may also compare here what the lieutenant says on the extravagant fashions of the day, and what Sganarelle in "L'Ecole des Maris" (Act I., Sc. 1) says on the same subject.

Lauretta's affection for officers is again English, but the touch in which she flatters her mother by telling her the lieutenant's opinion of her—"I heard him say you were the best natured and best looking woman in the world"—reminds us of the daughter in "Les Femmes Savantes" who uses similar means to set her mother against her sister's lover, and similarly plays upon her mother's vanity (Act IV., Sc. 2).

"Jamais je n'ai connu, discourant entre nous,  
Qu'il eût au fond du cœur de l'estime pour vous."

There are not many mothers in Molière. We have Madame Jourdain supporting the penchant of her daughter against the pretensions of her husband, whilst the stepmother in "Le Tartuffe" is as eager for the success of Mariane's love affairs. In "Les Femmes Savantes" we have a mother, and in "Le Malade Imaginaire" a stepmother, hostile to the love of the heroine. Thus Molière presents to us a mother and a stepmother of each kind, and we must compare Mrs. Credulous rather with the better kind, so far as her daughter's love affairs are concerned. Laura

confesses her love to her mother just as Angélique does hers to Toinette in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," and Ascagne hers to Frosine in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*," and Lisette does hers to Lucinde in "*L'Amour Médecin*." In these latter cases of Molière the servant takes the place of the mother as confidante of the heroine. We may note here the resemblance between Mrs. Bridget's picture of the life of a soldier's wife and that drawn by Dorine of Mariane as the wife of *Tartuffe* (Act II., Sc. 3).

MRS. BRIDGET: "No, give me the husband that knows where his limbs are, though he want the use of them; and if he should take you with him, to sleep in a baggage cart, and stroll about the camp like a gipsy, with a knapsack and two children at your back; then, by the way of entertainment in the evening, to make a party with the sergeant's wife, to drink bohea tea, and play at all-fours on a drumhead; 'tis a precious life, to be sure!"

DORINE:

"Votre sort est fort beau, de quoi vous plaignez-vous?

Vous irez par le coche en sa petite ville,  
Qu'en oncles et cousins vous trouverez fertile,  
Et vous vous plairez fort à les entretenir,  
D'abord chez le beau monde on vous fera venir;  
Vous irez visiter, pour votre bienvenue,  
Madame la baillive et madame l'élue,  
Qui d'un siège pliant vous feront honorer.  
Là, dans le carnaval, vous pourrez espérer  
Le bal et la grand'bande à savoir deux musettes,  
Et, parfois, Fagotin, et les marionnettes."

The scene in which the Justice cannot get spoken for the interruptions of his wife and daughter can be paralleled more than once in Molière. Monsieur Jourdain is similarly tormented by Nicole in Act III., Sc. 2, and is continually interrupted by her. In the last scene of "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," Octave refuses to hear what those around him wish to say, whilst in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," Argan is driven by Toinette into a fury similar to that of Justice Credulous (Act I., Scs. 2 and 5). Compare also "*Le Tartuffe*" (Act II., Sc. 3). But, perhaps, the most striking resemblance is between this scene and that in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*" (Act III., Sc. 6), where the words of the father GÉronte are similarly cut short by those of the daughter Lucinde.

The first stratagem—that of Humphrey Hum—which is doomed to failure, is similar to many a stratagem in Molière. They are identical in this respect—that it is always a plot entered into by the lover, with the assistance of a go-between, to get into



the presence of his mistress. The go-between here is Dr. Rosy. In Molière it is generally one of those servants who play so conspicuous a part in the French comedies. Thus, in "Le Sicilien," Adraste, with the help of Hali, and under the guise of a portrait painter, talks with Isidore under the very nose of D. Pèdre. In "Le Malade Imaginaire," Cléante, with the help of Toinette, and under the guise of a music master, declares his sentiments towards Angélique before the whole assembled company, in an unmistakable manner, and, like "Honest Humphrey," is promptly dismissed for his hardihood. Lélie, by a similar stratagem ("L'Etourdi," Act IV., Scs. 1 and 2), and with the help of Mascarille, dines with her he loves, but he also, in his eagerness, excites suspicion, which eventually ruins his scheme. We have similar stratagems also in "L'Amour Médecin" and in "Le Médecin malgré lui." Of these, the one most similar to "Humphrey Hum" is that in "Le Malade Imaginaire." There also Cléante gains admittance to the house of his beloved, and he is also ignominiously dismissed when discovered. The same trick is put into force with more success, however, by Valère in "L'Avare." He, indeed, arranges more cleverly, and carries out more discreetly, the very plan that O'Connor concocts, but mismanages. The position of Valère in the house of L'Avare is exactly that of Humphrey in the house of the Justice.

The scene with the peasants who are being enlisted is thoroughly English, but recalls also the peasants of Molière's comedies. The jargon and the uncouth sentences recall the peasants in "Don Juan," in "Le Médecin malgré lui," and in "Monsieur de Porceaugnac." In each case they are somewhat ridiculed, and their jargon is exaggerated; but we must note this difference—that the peasants introduced by Molière seem to serve more purpose in the play than those introduced here by Sheridan.

The mistake made by Trounce when he meets O'Connor in disguise recalls again that of Zerbinette when she gives Géronte, unwittingly, his true character to his face ("Les Fourberies de Scapin," Act III., Sc. 3). The situations are identical, and contain the same comic element and the same *dénouement*. It is so obvious a situation of humour, indeed, that it is remarkable that it should not occur oftener than it does. The plot of "L'Ecole des Femmes" hinges upon just such a situation, and throughout it Horace is making exactly the same mistake as Trounce makes here. Under similar conditions the hare-brained Lélie takes his rival into his confidence and spoils the plans of Mascarille. A similar effect is produced in "Le Malade Imaginaire," when, by means of a trick, Argan hears the true sentiments of his wife and daughter with regard to himself. In "George Dandin" also the talkative Lubin tells Dandin more than Dandin likes to hear.

The plot laid by O'Connor to prove the fidelity of Humphrey



is in the true style of Scapin, whilst the humorous touch of the Justice's treatment of the bribe recalls Covielle who wants the maid's reward in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," and the similar scene in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*" (Act II., Sc. 5). We have also the scene in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" (Act IV., Sc. 4) where Arnolphe is training Alain and Georgette in the methods of receiving Horace—

"Oui, fort bien, hors l'argent, qu'il ne fallait pas prendre."

The manner of the scene is similar to that in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*" (Act II., Sc. 5), although the purpose and the result are different.

Justice Credulous is like so many of the older men in Molière—avaricious. They are all unwilling to part with their money, and eager that their daughters should make wealthy marriages. His harshness to his daughter leads to open rebellion. Lauretta "can't bear to be shut up all day so like a nun," and is in that respect like Isabelle in "*L'Ecole des Maris*,"

"Toujours dans une chambre à ne point voir le monde."

Célie in "*Le Sicilien*" and the heroine of "*L'Etourdi*" are also shut up, but in their case they are slaves.

The good fortune of the Lieutenant and Lauretta of being left together in the garden recalls "*L'Avare*," where Mariane is taken to walk in the garden by her real lover, and "*George Dandin*," where a similar proceeding is similarly discovered. The Justice enters as inopportune for the lovers as does Arnolphe in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," when Horace is carrying off Agnès, and the deep laid plans of the lovers are in each case thwarted. Their being caught together is also reminiscent of a similar mishap in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," whilst the excuse of a "sudden giddiness" given by Lauretta is an echo of "*Sganarelle*," where the Cocu Imaginaire has in reality to bear false charges against himself for having aided a lady in such a case.

The excitement of the Justice on discovering the Lieutenant recalls Don Pèdre in "*Le Sicilien*" (Sc. 4).

JUSTICE: "Murder! Robbery! Fire! Rape! Gun-powder! Soldiers! John! Susan! Bridget!" etc. (Act II., Sc. 2).

DON PÈDRE: "Holà! Francisque, Dominique, Simon, Martin, Pierre, Thomas, Georges, Charles, Barthélemy! Allons, promptement, mon épée, ma rondache, ma hallebarde, mes pistolets, mes mousquetons, mes fusils! Vite, dépêchez! Allons, tue, point de quartier!"

Dr. Rosy's contemplations of victory on the very eve of defeat are similar to those of Mascarille just when *L'Etourdi* is about to upset his best laid plans, whilst the lugubrious moralising of the doctor throughout is similar in sentiment to that of Anselme in "*L'Etourdi*."

The quarrel between the Justice and his wife is very much after the usual style of Madame and Monsieur Jourdain, and the claim of the Justice to deference for "*unus quorum*" is as ludicrous as the claim of Monsieur Jourdain to deference as Mamamouchi.

As soon as the letter is read to the Justice, we have "*Le Malade Imaginaire*." He has lost his voice, his brain is giddy, and so on. And we have also Mrs. Credulous proving herself similar to Béline in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*" by her anxiety about the will and carelessness as to her husband's death. Béline, however, shows more hypocrisy than Mrs. Credulous.

MRS. BRIDGET: "Oh, lovee, you may be sure it is in vain;  
let him run for the lawyer to witness  
your will, my life."

BÉLINE: "Ah! mon ami, ne parlons point de cela,  
je vous prie; je ne saurais souffrir cette  
pensée, et le seul mot de testament me  
fait tressaillir de douleur."

Again, when the Justice says, "*Poison in my face*," etc., he gives himself away (even supposing the doctor had not been in the plot) just as the secret is similarly given to Sganarelle in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*."

The delusion of the Justice and of those around him recalls that of Anselme when he meets the supposed ghost of Pandolfe ("*L'Etourdi*," Act II., Sc. 4).

"Comme depuis sa mort sa face est amaigrie!"

The introduction of the German Quack also carries us back to "*Le Malade Imaginaire*." The present stratagem of O'Connor is found paralleled in "*L'Amour Médecin*"—where Sganarelle is likewise driven to utilise the services of a quack (Act II., Sc. 7),—in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*," and in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*." In the last play the situation is practically identical. The lover there is also introduced under a disguise which leads Monsieur Jourdain actively to support, unknowingly, the very suit he has previously opposed. Cléante is introduced as "*le fils du grand Turc*," unable to make himself understood to Monsieur Jourdain save by means of an interpreter. O'Connor is admitted as a last resort by the Justice, and his words also have to be interpreted. The interpretation in each case leads to wonder on the part of the dupe. Compare—

"Tant de choses en deux mots?"

("Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," Act IV., Sc. 4). and the remark of the Justice: "Did he say all that in so few words?" Their methods are similar, and the end they achieve is identical. In "*L'Amour Médecin*" Clitandre is introduced under the guise of a doctor and marries Lucinde with her father's consent, but without his knowledge of the truth. In "*Le Médecin malgré lui*," Léandre is introduced by Sganarelle in the same way

as O'Connor is by Dr. Rosy, but in this case the hero runs off with the heroine and returns to a regular marriage and her father's blessing on receipt of the news that he has come into a fortune. From any or all of these the stratagem in Sheridan's play might be derived. There is pronounced similarity, but there is also as much difference as effectually to preserve the originality of the scene. Mrs. Bridget's sentiment, "For my part, as much as I love you, I had rather follow you to your grave than see you owe your life to any but a regular-bred physician," is exactly that of L'Apothicaire in "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac" (Act I., Sc. 5).

"Il y a plaisir d'être son malade, et j'aimerais mieux mourir de ses remèdes que de guérir de ceux d'un autre;" and Eraste's ironical statement, "Un malade ne doit point vouloir guérir que la Faculté n'y consente."

The diagnosis of O'Connor is as ludicrous as that of Sganarelle in "Le Médecin malgré lui." After being told that the Justice has been given black arsenic, he pronounces the verdict that he has been poisoned. So Sganarelle, after being told what is wrong with Lucinde, feels her pulse.

SGANARELLE: "Voilà un poulx qui marque que votre fille est muette."

GÉRONTE: "Eh! oui, Monsieur, c'est là son mal; vous l'avez trouvé tout du premier coup."

And further we may compare the following sentiments:—

JUSTICE: "I won't die, Bridget. I don't like death."

MRS. BRIDGET: "Psha! there is nothing in it; a moment, and it is over."

JUSTICE: "Ay, but it leaves a numbness behind that lasts a plaguy long time."

MASCARILLE: "Eh! Monsieur mon cher maître, il est si doux de vivre! On ne meurt qu'une fois, et c'est pour si longtemps!"

("Dépit Amoureux," Act V., Sc. 3).

Two minor points may be mentioned finally. The entrance of Lauretta and her cry, "O my father, what is this I hear?" reminds us of the entrance of the daughter of Le Malade Imaginaire, when she is told her father is dead. And the lesson learnt by Justice Credulous, as shown by his words to his wife, is exactly that learnt by Argan regarding the hypocritical Béline in "Le Malade Imaginaire."

If we return, then, to the criticism of Sanders with which we commenced the consideration of this play, we admit the justice of his remark that much of it is drawn from "L'Ecole des Femmes," although much is also drawn from other plays. Sergeant Trounce being mistaken in talking to his lieutenant is exactly Horace in his dealings with Arnolphe.

The humorous touch of the bribe offered to Humphry Hum, and retained by the Justice, recalls Arnolphe's lesson to Alain and

Georgette, which is to his satisfaction, except for their taking the money. The ruses of Horace to obtain admittance to Agnès are decidedly similar to those of O'Connor. Even Arnolphe makes an attempt at moralising—"nous sommes tous mortels"—in his conversation with Agnès (Act II., Sc. 5).

But in the stratagem which procures Lauretta for the lieutenant, we have much more decided similarity with such plays as "L'Amour Médecin," "Le Médecin malgré lui," and "Le Bourgeois Gentlehomme." To these we really owe the plot of this comedy so far as its *dénouement* is concerned, and in that respect the influence of "L'Ecole des Femmes" sinks into comparative insignificance.

We see, however, that this short comedy shows as much as any the influence of Molière on our author. Molière, indeed, can be traced all through it, and this one play would itself be sufficient to prove that Sheridan had an extensive knowledge of the French author, and that, in all likelihood, in the original.



## CHAPTER IV.

## "THE RIVALS."

It is in the preface to this play that Sheridan says his first wish is to avoid every appearance of plagiarism, and that, being in a walk he had little frequented, he was "less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection." We have shown, however, that if he was new to the writing of this kind of comedy, he had at least read extensively the author whom he adopted, consciously or unconsciously, as his model, and we shall have to consider at the end whether the proofs justify us in saying he has succeeded in his object of avoiding those starts of recollection or not. Of plagiarism there is no question, in this or in any of his plays. All are of indisputable originality, but all show traces of the master in whose steps he follows.

We have here again a complicated love element, where Lydia with her many suitors and romantic temperament is in sharp contrast to Julia, the steadfast lover of Faulkland. Although at the beginning true love seems likely to meet with oppression, as the plot proceeds the sky clears in that direction only to darken in another, and it is true love itself which causes its own difficulties in the one case by jealousy, and in the other by overweening romanticism. In that latter respect, at least, the play is more original than any of the others, and differs more from those of Molière, although in his comedies, too, lovers' quarrels occur frequently.

The news conveyed at the outset of the arrival of Sir Anthony in Bath, where his son is carrying on a love affair, brings us back to "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," where the commencement also deals with the unfortunate arrival of the father of Octave as announced by Sylvestre, at a moment most inopportune for the love affairs of Octave himself. The meeting of the two servants, who discuss the affairs of those they serve, and thus give a clue to what is to follow is comparable to the confidential relations existing between Scapin and Sylvestre, and to the dealings of Alain and Georgette in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" Thomas, indeed, is of little importance, as he appears nowhere else in the play, but Fag is of prime importance, and is exactly of the type of those confidential servants in Molière who play so important a rôle, and of whom Scapin is the outstanding example. In his loquacity and readiness to reveal his master's secrets, he may be compared to Lubin in "*George Dandin*," although he does not, by his information, do so much harm to his master's cause. His

exaggerated idea of the wealth of Lydia Languish recalls the sentiments of the peasantry in "Don Juan," when talking of the wealthy. The opening scene is, however, most similar to that of "Don Juan," where Sganarelle and Gusman discuss the movements and designs of Don Juan, and where their confidences similarly serve the purpose of letting the audience know how matters stand at the beginning.

*Act II., Sc. 1.*—We are now introduced to Lydia, whose character, if we are to judge from her reading material, is not only romantic, but of rather a low taste. Her request for the "sal volatile," and the misconception of the order by Lucy, "Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?" recalls "Les Précieuses Ridicules" and "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas," whilst the rebuke of Lydia, "My smelling bottle, you simpleton!" is exactly in the style of "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas," who cannot get her servants to understand her high-flown names, and "Les Femmes Savantes," where Martine is threatened with dismissal for a similar reason. Compare:—

LYDIA: Very well, give me the sal volatile.

LUCY: Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

LYDIA: My smelling bottle, you simpleton.

(Sheridan).

MADÉLON: Vite, venez nous tendre ici dedans le conseiller des grâces.

MAROTTE: Par ma foi, je ne sais point quelle bête c'est là; il faut parler chrétien, si vous voulez que je vous entende.

CATHOS: Apportez-nous le miroir, ignorante que vous êtes!  
(*"Les Précieuses Ridicules," Sc. 6.*)

The two heroines, Julia and Lydia, resemble none more than the two in "Don Garcie de Navarre"—Elvire and Ignès. Fast friends, whose love affairs absorb themselves and each other, they stand by each other throughout all the difficulties and tests their love is put to. We shall have occasion to go more fully into the resemblance between Don Garcie himself and Faulkland, the jealous lover, but meantime we may note the similarity that exists between the heroines. The character of Lydia herself is a strange one, and cannot easily be paralleled in Molière. Her capricious romanticism is not such as to make us admire her; although, when we are told by Sir Anthony that she is but seventeen years old, we can make all allowances for immaturity and childishness. To that must be ascribed much that would not be expected of a heroine really enamoured of the hero.

The initial conversation of these two gives us much information as to what has been going on and how things stand. In that respect it is similar to the opening scene of "Les Fourberies de Scapin," obviously intended to acquaint the audience with the exact point at which the story is to be taken up. It is a device

which is burlesqued in "The Critic" (Act II., Sc. 2). The touch of Mrs. Malaprop, assuming the name of Delia, as mentioned here, recalls the conceit of Les Précieuses Ridicules, who wish to assume more romantic names in place of their common ones. The lover's quarrel in this case, and its cause, are not similar to such as in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" and "Le Tartuffe," and must, indeed, be attributed to what was mentioned above—the youth of Lydia. We learn here also that Faulkland saved Julia's life, and thus earned her gratitude, if not her love. In "L'Avare," Valère similarly saved the life of Harpagon's daughter, and in "Les Fourberies de Scapin," Zerbinette is saved from slavery, at least, by her lover, whilst in "Le Malade Imaginaire," Angélique speaks also of her lover's undertaking her defence as being the commencement of their mutual affection. "Ne trouves-tu pas que cette action d'embrasser ma défense sans me connaître est tout à fait d'un honnête homme."

The ideas of Sir Anthony and of Mrs. Malaprop of what a girl should be, and of the power of authority over her, are such as many of the fathers and guardians in Molière entertain. Sir Anthony's aversion to reading recalls "L'Ecole des Femmes," where Arnolphe also regrets bitterly, but too late, that Agnès has been taught to write.

"Voilà, friponne, à quoi l'écriture te sert,  
Et contre mon dessein, l'art t'en fut découvert."

Lydia's references, too, to books *à la mode* remind us of those which Les Précieuses Ridicules were fond of reading, and from which they drew their sentiments (Sc. 4). Arnolphe's references in "L'Ecole des Femmes" (Act I., Sc. 1) to books and their effects are exactly similar to those of Sir Anthony here. The ideas which Sheridan expresses, in exaggerated manner, through the words of Sir Anthony, are simply those which Molière sets forth by caricature in "Les Précieuses Ridicules" and in "Les Femmes Savantes." There is this difference, however, that the satire of Molière is bitter, whilst the words of Sir Anthony, taken at their proper value, give no clue to Sheridan's real sentiments. We find similar sentiments expressed by Gorgibus in "Sganarelle," when dealing with his daughter (Sc. 1). Célie, indeed, is not of so romantic a type as Lydia, but her father has the same fault to find with her. "Qu'on vous voit nuit et jour à lire vos romans." And she also, by his account, has her head "remplie de quolibets d'amour."

The sentiments of Mrs. Malaprop with regard to matrimony are very similar to those expressed by Molière in different places. Compare—

MRS. MALAPROP: What business have you, miss, with preference and aversion? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know,

that as both always wear off, 'tis safest  
in matrimony to begin with a little  
aversion.

(“The Rivals”).

GORGIBUS : “Valère, je crois bien, n'est pas de toi chéri;  
Mais, s'il ne l'est amant, il le sera mari.  
Plus que l'on ne le croit, ce nom d'époux  
engage,  
Et l'amour est souvent un fruit du mariage.”  
(“Sganarelle.”)

ANSELME : “Quand on ne prend en dot que la seule  
beauté,  
Le remords est bien près de la solennité.  
Et la plus belle femme a très peu de  
défense  
Contre cette tiédeur qui suit la jouissance.”  
(“L'Etourdi.”)

Mrs. Malaprop is as averse to Higher Education for women  
as is Arnolphe in “L'Ecole des Femmes” or Sganarelle in  
“L'Ecole des Maris.” Compare:—

MRS. MALAPROP : “I would by no means wish a daughter of  
mine to be a progeny of learning; I  
don't think so much learning becomes  
a young woman.”  
(“The Rivals.”)

ARNOLPHE : “Non, non, je ne veux point d'un esprit  
qui soit haut,  
Et femme qui compose en sait plus qu'il  
ne faut.”  
(“L'Ecole des Femmes.”)

The treatment prescribed by Sir Anthony for a recalcitrant  
daughter—to “clap her under lock and key” is one of great  
frequency in Molière. The obstinacy of daughters is indeed the  
pivot on which the bulk of these comedies turn.

Mrs. Malaprop is quite willing to sacrifice the interests of  
Acres now that a better match has been offered. In that respect  
she resembles Gorgibus in “Sganarelle,” who is quite prepared  
to let Lélia go for a man with more wealth, and Orgon in “Le  
Tartuffe” who similarly refuses to be bound by his promise to  
Valère. Acres, indeed, neither attracts our sympathy nor comes  
out as well as these two other heroes, but the treatment afforded  
him is identical.

Lucy, as go-between, plays the usual part of the servant in  
Molière—invaluable to the lovers. As such she recalls Dorine of  
“Le Tartuffe,” Nicole of “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,” and  
Toinette of “Le Malade Imaginaire,” to mention but a few.  
As mock simpleton and as deceiver of Mrs. Malaprop she recalls



rather Scapin in his various escapades, whilst her catalogue of gains contains an echo of the catalogue of "Le Malade Imaginaire" at the commencement of that play.

The character of Jack Absolute contains a vein of originality which puts it on a plane different from that of any of the heroes of Molière. He is, of course, essentially English as Molière's characters are essentially French. His intrigue with Lydia rather savours of the character of double dealing, however; and just as Lydia as a heroine does not come up to the usual standard of heroines in Molière, so Jack also falls somewhat short of the general ideal character of heroes. Indeed, Jack's double dealing with his mistress cannot be paralleled in Molière, just as Lydia's whim to be carried off and refusal to marry the same man, when she finds she can do so with everybody's consent, has no parallel. The situation in "La Princesse d'Elide," and the means employed by Euriale to gain his ends, are somewhat similar, if we make allowance for more intrigue in the case of the Rivals. Fag again reminds us of Scapin in his enthusiasm for his master, in his little affairs and parties of his own, and in the complaisant lies he tells on his master's behalf, and his fear only of being found out. He is the inevitable servant whose appearance always tends to bring humour into the piece, and who takes charge of his master's love affairs as if they were his own.

As for the jealous character of Faulkland, we must look to Don Garcie de Navarre for one in Molière with any resemblance to it, and there we find the resemblance striking. This play of Molière's is not one which has much in common with those of Sheridan, but in respect of this character it seems exceedingly probable that Sheridan has been influenced by it. Don Garcie displays the same petulant ever-watchful spirit over his mistress as Faulkland, but whereas Faulkland is railed at by Jack for his feelings and Julia by Lydia for her complaisance, Don Garcie is sympathised with by Elise (Act IV. Sc. 6), and Elvire is blamed by Ignès. Faulkland can never fully convince himself of Julia's love, and his feelings could be expressed by the words of Don Garcie, whilst the state of mind of Faulkland, as shown in his interview with Jack Absolute and Acres, is admirably summed up in the words:—

"Qui, dans les soins jaloux où son âme se noie,  
Querelle également mon chagrin et ma joie."

("Don Garcie de Navarre").

Faulkland's query of Acres (Act II., Sc. 1) regarding the conduct of Julia during his absence is similar to that of Arnolphe concerning the conduct of Agnès.

ARNOLPHE: Lorsque je m'en allai, fut-elle triste après ?

GEORGETTE: Triste ? Non.

ARNOLPHE: Non ?

Compare "The Rivals," Act III., Sc. 2, with—

DON GARCIE : " Moins on mérite un bien qu'on nous fait  
espérer,  
Plus notre âme a de peine à pouvoir s'assurer;  
Un sort trop plein de gloire à nos yeux est  
fragile,  
Et nous laisse aux soupçons une pente facile.  
Pour moi, qui crois si peu mériter vos bontés,  
J'ai douté du bonheur de mes témérités ;  
J'ai cru que dans ces lieux rangés sous ma  
puissance,  
Votre âme se forçait à quelque complaisance;  
Que, déguisant pour moi votre sévérité . . .  
(" Don Garcie de Navarre ").

The type of mind is, therefore, identical in each case, and in details also a vein of similarity can be traced. Lydia is under a debt of gratitude to Faulkland for having saved her life; Elvire is equally beholden to Don Garcie for the protection afforded from the troubles of her own state. Both Faulkland and Don Garcie push their jealousy to such a point as to cause their mistresses to renounce their allegiance to them; but in both cases a reconciliation takes place. The working out of this, the main plot in Molière, the sub-plot in Sheridan, is done differently by each author. There is this primary difference between the two—that Faulkland, reluctant though he may be to believe in his own good fortune, has never any fear of a present rival—a fear which haunts and pursues Don Garcie throughout. Again, Don Garcie is rather drawn into error by his scheming servant, whereas Faulkland is himself the author of his own misfortunes. Thus, in this respect, as in so many others, whilst a distinct similarity can be shown in broad outline, there is a divergence in minor detail which preserves originality.

With what figure in Molière should we best compare Acres? From his first appearance in Act II. we should say Monsieur de Porceaugnac, and this surmise is confirmed by what happens to him later. He begins by being as unpleasantly communicative to Faulkland as Lubin is to George Dandin. But his position is strangely reminiscent of Monsieur de Porceaugnac. He has newly come from the country with all his provincial ways and provincial ideas in search of a bride, who, he finds, has no fancy for him, and who has already pledged herself to another. He is full of a conceit of himself which impels him blindly forward against all obstacles. He is a boaster, and at heart a coward, but a harmless character withal, and one who can easily be got rid of by a little scaring, and who can soon be treated as of little or no account; one who is glad to get cheaply out of the difficulties he has suddenly found himself surrounded by. Such a description suits equally Acres and Monsieur de Porceaugnac.

Both two are influenced by a stronger will than their own—Acres by Sir Lucius and Monsieur de Porceaugnac by Sbrigani. Acres is "Fighting Bob," in his own country, and Monsieur de Porceaugnac also brags of his achievements. "Parbleu! il trouva à qui parler!" It is somewhat significant to note that we have a Julie as heroine in "Monsieur de Porceaugnac," although her *rôle* corresponds not to that of Julia, but to that of Lydia. She, too, as we are informed at the beginning, has been forbidden intercourse with her lover, and clandestinely disobeys the command.

We are naturally led further to compare Acres with Thomas Diafoirus, but in this case we find little resemblance, except in so far as each is a clown. Both are, indeed, equally unfortunate in their love affairs, but that, again, is but the natural result of their clownishness. Acres plays a more important part than Diafoirus; and, indeed, it is self-evident that Sheridan did not draw upon this character for his idea of Acres. Acres' conceit with regard to his clothes and his dancing reminds us rather of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, where he deals with his tradesmen and gets himself dressed extravagantly. But whilst *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is laughed at by Nicole and by his wife, Acres gets encouraged by his servant David and by others around him. Compare also Acres' sentiments on his dress with those of Monsieur de Porceaugnac.

PORCEAUGNAC: Pour moi, j'ai voulu me mettre à la mode de la cour pour la campagne.

SBRIGANI: Ma foi, cela vous va mieux qu'à tous nos courtisans.

PORCEAUGNAC: C'est ce que m'a dit mon tailleur; l'habit est propre et riche, et il fera du bruit ici.

The stormy scene between Sir Anthony and his son, sparkling with wit, is on the lines of so many scenes throughout Molière, mostly between fathers and recalcitrant daughters. The situation is one of the most familiar, and does not require to be specially paralleled. If the resemblance is more close to any particular one, it is to such scenes in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," for there also it is the sons who are disobedient, there also the fathers unexpectedly appear on the scene at a most unwelcome juncture, and there also the *dénouement* shows us that both father and son have been aiming at the same thing. Géronte is as ready to "unget" his son as Sir Anthony is, and Argante is equally prepared to disinherit his son.

GÉRONTE: "Ah! traître, s'il faut que tu me déshonores, je te renonce pour mon fils, et tu peux bien pour jamais te résoudre à fuir de ma présence."

("Les Fourberies de Scapin.")



Sir Anthony utters the same sentiment with greater flights of imagination :—

“Don’t enter the same hemisphere with me ! Don’t dare to breathe the same air ; but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own ! . . . I’ll disown you, I’ll disinherit you, I’ll unget you !” (“The Rivals.”)

The skeleton outline of the plot of these two plays is identical, whilst the double love interest in both leads us to look for a similarity in detail, which, as a fact, does not exist. The working at cross purposes of the two pairs, Octave and Argante, Léandre and Géronte is exactly similar to the situation which exists between Sir Anthony and his son, and in all three cases we have the quarrels resultant from such a situation. Whilst, however, in Molière the clearing up of this situation forms the *dénouement* of the plot, in Sheridan it is but a step towards the *dénouement*, and “The Rivals” differs in being carried further and in having more action in it than “Les Fourberies de Scapin.”

Fag, as we have seen, also resembles Scapin to a slight degree in his relations to his master and to Sir Anthony, and the scene where he is trounced by his master and trounces the boy in return might be compared to that in “L’Avare,” where Maître Jacques is worsted both by his master and by Valère, whom he attacks, thinking to be able to get the better of him (Act III., Sc 2) Fag’s sentiment with regard to his master’s father, “I should certainly drop his acquaintance,” reminds us of that of Don Juan’s servant Sganarelle (Act IV., Sc. 5)—“Oui, Monsieur, vous avez tort d’avoir souffert ce qu’il vous a dit, et vous le deviez mettre dehors par les épaules.”

The impecunious Irishman who desires to make a wealthy match, but refuses to do so at the expense of marrying Mrs. Malaprop, has no counterpart in Molière. We, indeed, find in the French dramatist fortune hunters, such as Tartuffe, Trissotin, Diafoirus, and those in the heroic plays like “Les Amants Magnifiques” and “La Princesse d’Elide.” But these bear little or no resemblance to the bold and quarrelsome Sir Lucius who carries his pretensions with a high hand, and wins our esteem by his independence and by his high code of honour. If he resembles anyone at all in Molière, it is, by his impecuniosity, Dorante of “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.” But there, too, the resemblance is small.

Lucy, again acting as go-between, is surprised by Fag, who naturally draws a wrong conclusion from seeing her in close conversation with Sir Lucius. She is subjected to the same unjust suspicions as is Mascarille in “L’Etourdi,” when Hippolyte comes upon him in close converse with Pandolfe and seemingly working against her interests, as Lucy here seems to work against the interests of Fag and his master (“L’Etourdi,” Act I., Sc. 8).



However, satisfactory explanations follow and both Lucy and Mascarille are absolved.

*Act III., Sc. 1.*—Jack's sudden penitential conversion is reminiscent of that of Don Juan, although Jack is not so great a villain as Don Juan is, and his conversion is for a different reason. Don Juan is thoroughly hypocritical in order to compass his own ends the better, and his hypocrisy is villainous, whereas that of Jack Absolute is humorous, tends to harm no one, and is merely forced upon him by circumstances. We feel assured that had things been different Jack would firmly have resisted his father. His sudden change is more similar to that of Lucile in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," when she finds who *Le Fils du Grand Turc* really is, whilst it also recalls the happy endings of "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," of "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," and of "*Le Dépit Amoureux*." The *dénouement* of these four plays turns on the discovery of the identity of choice between father and child, as does Jack's sudden penitence here. Don Juan's praise of hypocrisy has no place here, and Sir Anthony is as ready to forgive—when he gets his own way—as are, again, the fathers in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*."

In *Scene 2* we find the characters of Julia and of Faulkland more fully set before us. Faulkland we have considered, but here may be noted a trait which appears for the first time—his conceit—a conceit almost worthy of Monsieur de Porceaugnac, though not so fantastic as his. His jealous probings into the reason for Julia's love are as exacting as the suspicions of Don Garcie, though of a different nature, and like Don Garcie he will be satisfied with no assurance. Julia is a womanly type of steadfast love, that quality being brought all the more into prominence by the captious fault-finding of her lover. Steadfast love in heroines is, indeed, the rule throughout these comedies, but in the case of Julia it seems to be emphasised by the unjust treatment she receives at the hands of Faulkland and by the waywardness of Lydia's mind. Lovers' quarrels indeed occur in Molière as we have seen, but none are of the precise character of this one between Julia and Faulkland, save those frequent ones which take place between Don Garcie and Elvire. Only Eraste in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" is similarly troubled with doubts and fears of a jealous nature, and similarly offends his mistress by showing that jealousy and giving expression to that fear. But in his case there is abundant excuse, and he is rather the victim of circumstances than a prey to incessant gnawing jealousy. He, too, has more delicacy than Faulkland, and does not insult his mistress to her face as Faulkland does.

*Scene 3.*—The interview between Jack Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop is one of the most humorous in the play, and lends itself especially to double-entendres and dramatic irony. The character of Mrs. Malaprop herself is outstanding in the play, and

unique so far as our two authors are concerned. We have, indeed, examples of malapropisms in Molière such as those of "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," and those of the peasants in "Le Médecin malgré lui," but no character shows this trait so consistently and to such an extent as Mrs. Malaprop. She is to a great extent borrowed from a character in Mrs. Sheridan's unfinished comedy, "A Trip to Bath," and her fantastic language owes as little to Molière as the Irish bulls of Sir Lucius. In other respects she resembles the ordinary guardian of the comedies in her high-handed treatment of her niece; and in her idea that Sir Lucius is in love with her she plays the part of Bélise in "Les Femmes Savantes," though her undeceiving is more complete and more cruel. The character of Mrs. Malaprop herself is somewhat akin to those of "Les Femmes Savantes," although her own expressed opinion of what a woman ought to know is not extravagantly ambitious (Act I., Sc. 2). The present scene in which Jack plays a double part, as between Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia, is to all intents and purposes that favourite scene in which the lovers hold a forbidden interview under the very eyes and with the consent of the one who forbids. The complication of the double character of Jack serves to add additional piquancy and interest to the scene, but in other respects it is the same as that in "L'Avare," where, under the nose of Harpagon, Mariane and Cléante exchange compliments, whose double-entendre Harpagon fails to understand. Just as this scene lends itself to dramatic irony through the boastful assurance of Mrs. Malaprop, so that in "L'Avare" is similarly fruitful owing to the want of suspicion on the part of Harpagon (Act III., Sc. 7). He is hoodwinked all through, and the two lovers go into the garden to hold far different conversation from what he supposes; Mrs. Malaprop is hoodwinked also, and would have been at the moment exceedingly surprised to hear the tenor of the lovers' conversation. Thus far, then, the scenes are identical. Similarly in such scenes as in "Le Sicilien," where the hero introduces himself as a painter, in "Le Malade Imaginaire," where he introduces himself as a singer, and in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," where he is Le Fils du Grand Turc, we have the same idea carried out and the same situation created. It is a favourite situation in comedies, and one naturally prolific of humour. Jack's double position here, and the way in which he uses it, remind us also of "L'Ecole des Femmes," where Arnolphe similarly benefits by a two-fold name to upset the plans of Horace. But the similarity goes no further, for it is in this case the lover who is hoodwinked and not he who hoodwinks. The letter which Jack has to go through the mockery of reading is dimly reminiscent of that in "Don Garcie"; although there the letter is new to Don Garcie and food for his jealous suspicions.

Compare:—

ABSOLUTE (reads): "As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you——"

MASCARILLE: "Mais un dragon, veillant sur ce rare trésor,  
N'a pu, quoiqu'il ait fait, le lui permettre encor."

("L'Etourdi").

VALÈRE: "De quoi c'est que j'enrage?  
De voir celle que j'aime au pouvoir d'un sauvage,  
D'un dragon surveillant dont la sévérité  
Ne lui laisse jouir d'aucune liberté."

("L'Ecole des Maris").

"La confiance d'une dupe est la chose du monde la plus comique." Mrs. Malaprop's position in this scene, and her boastfulness, are exactly those of Géronte in Act III., Sc. 7, of "Le Médecin malgré lui." Compare—

MRS. MALAPROP: "Did you ever hear anything like it?  
He'll elude my vigilance, will he?  
Yes, yes! Ha! ha! he's very likely  
to enter these doors. We'll try who  
can plot best!"

GÉRONTE: "J'ai bien empêché qu'ils n'aient eu communication ensemble."

SGANARELLE: "Fort bien."

GÉRONTE: "Il serait arrivé quelque folie si j'avais souffert qu'ils se fussent vus."

SGANARELLE: "Sans doute"

GÉRONTE: "Et je crois qu'elle aurait été fille à s'en aller avec lui."

SGANARELLE: "C'est prudemment raisonné."

GÉRONTE: "On m'avertit qu'il fait tous ses efforts pour lui parler."

SGANARELLE: "Quel drôle!"

GÉRONTE: "Mais il perdra son temps."

SGANARELLE: "Ah! ah!"

GÉRONTE: "Et j'empêcherai bien qu'il ne la voie."

The intrusion of Mrs. Malaprop is untimely, but, fortunately for the lovers, she is not of the same penetration as Le Malade Imaginaire, and does not hear enough to arouse her suspicions. The scene at this point is again very close in its resemblance to that in "L'Avare," and Mrs. Malaprop and Harpagon cut the same figure in their misunderstanding of the words they hear. Lydia and Jack, however, get as well out of the scrape as do Mme. Dandin and her lover out of a similar difficulty.

Act III., Sc. 4.—Acres has the same difficulty in getting his courage fixed as Sganarelle has, and, like Sganarelle, even with a

prompter, he finds it oozing out at his finger tips. Sir Lucius does here directly to Acres what Célie does indirectly to Sganarelle, and the resemblance between the two is still fuller when we come to consider the duel scene. The influence of Sir Lucius over Acres might be likened to that of Ariste over Chrysale in "Les Femmes Savantes."

*Act IV., Sc. 1.*—David's ideas of honour are no more crude nor less sophisticated than those of Arnolphe in Act I. of "L'Ecole des Femmes." David's remonstrances to his master are somewhat similar to those which Sganarelle attempts to give to Don Juan on other grounds. His description of the challenge is reminiscent of a similar touch in "Le Misanthrope." Compare—

DAVID: "By the mass! it don't look like another letter!  
It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious  
looking letter; and I warrant smells of gun-  
powder like a soldier's pouch! Oons! I  
wouldn't swear it mayn't go off!"

DU BOIS: Monsieur, un homme noir d'habit et de mine  
Est venu nous laisser jusque dans la cuisine,  
Un papier griffonné d'une telle façon,  
Qu'il faudrait, pour le lire, être pis que démon.

("Le Misanthrope," Act IV., Sc. 4.)

The part played by David here is precisely that of Mascarille in "Le Dépit Amoureux" (see especially Act V., Sc. 3). Mascarille has as little courage as David, although he serves a master of a different sort, and is as anxious to prevent fighting, and as nervous about it, as David is. The introduction by David of touches of home life to try to soften his master are not found in Molière. Servants, indeed, as a rule, play this rôle in the comedies. Don Juan's servant, Sganarelle, is terrified by the Commander, and tries to shirk accompanying his master. In "Le Dépit Amoureux" we have seen Mascarille a coward, and in "L'Avare," Maître Jacques is similarly devoid of courage, like Sosie in "Amphitryon," whilst we may be allowed to doubt the fortitude even of Scapin. As for Acres giving the challenge to Jack, not knowing him to be Beverley, a mistake somewhat similar is made by Valère in "Le Dépit Amoureux," when he challenges Ascagne. His references to his valour in his own country are, as we have seen, like those of Monsieur de Porceaugnac, who is similarly flattered by Eraste, whilst he is as anxious about the reputation Jack is to give him as is Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme and Harpagon, for other reasons, and the reputation Jack promises him is such as Scapin gives to Sylvestre, and thereby frightens Argante

*Act IV., Sc. 2.*—The scene where all are at sixes and sevens, and nobody knows who's who and what's what, is again a favourite one with our dramatists. In this case the double



character of Jack makes the situation possible. In "*Le Dépit Amoureux*," the disguise of Ascagne produces similar results, and in "*Sganarelle*" we have a very similar scene of confusion, owing to the wrong ideas picked up by the lovers. Similarly in the ending of "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," Octave, in ignorance of the turn of events, refuses to listen to his father offering him the person he himself most wishes to marry, and in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," Arnolphe, in ignorance, rises to the pitch of his conceit to be thrown more fully into the depths of despair when he finds he has been recommending his own undoing. The heroine in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," again, views with natural horror an alliance with *Le Fils du Grand Turc* until she finds out who he is, and Sganarelle in "*L'Ecole des Maris*" hastens the destruction of his own hopes for similar reasons. All such scenes depend upon the ignorance of one of the chief characters of the turn of events, but in the cases we have just mentioned as parallels the enlightenment that comes is propitious to the lovers, and ends in their union. Here it is the reverse, and the discovery of Jack threatens to bring disaster to his hopes, for the romantic Lydia has been cheated out of the hoped-for elopement.

As for the lovers' quarrel in "*Le Tartuffe*," Valère, like Jack, takes the wrong way with his mistress, which leads to a threatened rupture. In "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" a misunderstanding and coolness arise between the lovers, owing to the strict etiquette of the old aunt, whose ideas Lucile flatters, whilst in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" the complications naturally give rise to feelings of jealousy which all but upset the course of true love. In "*Le Misanthrope*" we have scarcely a quarrel, for Alceste is at warfare perpetually with his mistress, and is more to be compared to Faulkland in his brooding jealousy than to the double-dealing Jack. In "*Sganarelle*" also the lovers are greatly at variance through misunderstandings, and, of course, Don Garcie, like Faulkland, is continually forfeiting the kindness of his mistress. Mrs. Malaprop is justly indignant when she discovers Jack's identity, but is speedily mollified by Sir Anthony. Her experience is very similar to that of Géronte in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," to whom Zerbinette, all unwittingly, utters, "*mille sottises au nez.*" Both are induced to swallow the affront, and, indeed, Mrs. Malaprop has still more to swallow in what follows. But the scenes are amusing in the same way, although they differ slightly in detail in that in Sheridan Mrs. Malaprop is ignorant at the beginning of the identity of the writer of the letter, whilst in Molière it is Zerbinette who does not know to whom she is speaking, and requires to be undeceived in the end ("*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," Act III., Sc. 3). We may compare the scene also to the experiences of Arnolphe throughout "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," who has to suffer similarly at the hands of Horace, and has to swallow "*la fâcheuse pilule.*"

The construction put upon the scene at the end of this Act by Sir Anthony, is worthy of Arnolphe in the "ribbon" scene of "L'Ecole des Femmes," or of Le Malade Imaginaire when he tries to extort more information from Louison about her sister.

*Act IV., Sc. 3.*—The quarrel sought by Sir Lucius, and the challenge delivered, find no near parallel in Molière. In fact, the lovers there seem never to dream of ending a dispute in this way. Rivalry in love is carried on without the least hint of the idea of settling it with the sword, as the go-ahead Irishman is bent on doing at once. There is, indeed, a suggestion of fighting in "Le Dépit Amoureux," but not between the rivals, and Sganarelle's desire to slay his supposed rival is merely ludicrous and never attains to the dignity of a challenge or a duel. Even George Dandin has not the smallest idea of clearing his honour by calling out his man. The entire absence of duelling in Molière is somewhat remarkable at a time when, and in a country where, the practice must have been rife, and on a subject which more than any other was likely to cause it. Are we to look for the reason in Molière's own habits, and in his own aversion to fighting, just as we may consider Sheridan's own experience of duels to have somewhat influenced him in introducing them (as here), or the suggestion of them (as in the "Duenna") into his comedies? It is a point which could not be settled definitely, but it is interesting to note the absence of this trait in Molière.

Jack plays to Faulkland the part which Philinte plays to Alceste in "Le Misanthrope." It is to him that Faulkland unbosoms himself, and it is he who gives sage advice and tries to wean him from his brooding jealousy. There is a good deal of similarity between Faulkland and Le Misanthrope. Indeed, the character of Faulkland is no better than that of Alceste. His treatment of his mistress is unworthy, and he has not in this respect the excuse of Alceste—that his mistress deserves no better at his hands.

*Act V., Sc. 1.*—We have no parallel in Molière to the scene where Faulkland puts to the test Julia's love. Indeed we can scarce understand such a scene or such a character as Faulkland's to be consistent with true love. The character of Don Garcie is, indeed, similar, but he, although jealous as ever man was, has some slight excuse for jealousy in the mistakes he makes and in the insinuations of his servant. Furthermore, he does not probe into the feelings of Elvire and congratulate himself on a "too exquisite nicety" which means torture to the one he loves. The character of Faulkland seems overdrawn and unnatural, not to say diseased, and it goes without saying that Molière's treatment of love and of lovers is far more natural than that of Sheridan's here. The ruse adopted by Faulkland for the testing of Julia's love is mean and ungentlemanly, and it would have been only just to him had Julia adhered to her resolution of casting him off

for ever. Elvire has, perhaps, as much to suffer from the jealousy of Don Garcie in a different way, and she, too, is driven to swear solemnly that she will break off all intercourse with her lover, but she, too, in the end comes back upon her resolution, and we are left to hope that the jealousies and infirmities of the lovers are cured when the knot of marriage is tied. The ladies are better types of womanhood than the flippant Célimène of "*Le Misanthrope*," who would not, like Julia, follow her lover "in beggary through the world." The mind of Alceste is as much awry as is that of Faulkland, but he, at least, has some excuse for his suspicions and for his expostulations, and we can only think that it is fortunate for him that Célimène is unlike Julia, and refuses to forsake the company to which she is accustomed in order to follow him.

In this scene Julia rises to a pitch of tenderness and of dignity worthy of Elvire in "*Don Juan*." Elvire is another distressed heroine, with far more real distress than even Julia; and yet her tender solicitude for the one she has loved, and who has betrayed her, reach even a higher plane than that of Julia. Compare:—

ELVIRE: "Je vous ai aimé avec une tendresse extrême, rien au monde ne m'a été si cher que vous, j'ai oublié mon devoir pour vous. j'ai fait toutes choses pour vous, et toute la récompense que je vous en demande, c'est de corriger votre vie et de prévenir votre perte. Sauvez-vous, je vous prie, ou pour l'amour de vous, ou pour l'amour de moi. Encore une fois, Don Juan, je vous le demande avec larmes, et, si ce n'est assez des larmes d'une personne que vous avez aimée, je vous en conjure par tout ce qui est le plus capable de vous toucher."

("Don Juan," Act IV., Sc 6)

JULIA: "I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper, which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement. All I request of you is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of, let it not be your least regret, that it lost you the love of one who would have followed you in beggary through the world."

Reconciliation in the case of Elvire is rendered impossible by the character of Don Juan, but in her long suffering, and in the persistence of her love, she is identical in character to Julia.

Lydia is still romantic and peevish and requires as much



coaxing, and has as absurd notions as *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. She is as difficult to conciliate as is *Célie* in "*Sganarelle*," and she has not the excuse of the latter. Heroines who sulk with their parents owing to the treatment afforded them we have in Molière (as in "*L'Amour Médecin*"), but no heroine who really sulks with her lover as *Lydia* does here. As we have seen there are lovers' quarrels in Molière, and that between *Célie* and *Lélie* in "*Sganarelle*" is one of the most determined; but all these quarrels differ in kind and in degree as the characters of the heroines differ from that of *Lydia*, and for a parallel to *Lydia's* caprice we are almost tempted to take *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, and to say that *Lydia* deserved no better a fate than was their lot.

The great difficulty with which any news is extorted from *Fag* regarding the duel about to take place, reminds us of the similar difficulty of *Sganarelle* in "*Le Mariage Forcé*," when he interrogates *Pangrace* and *Marphurius* on his projected marriage. *Fag* does not show precisely the same inventiveness of circumlocution as these learned doctors, but he is equally annoying to the impatient *Lydia* as they are to *Sganarelle*. *Métaphraste* is similarly annoying to *Albert*—not this time by his reticence but by his loquacity—in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*." A closer parallel to this scene, however, where *Fag* exhausts the patience of his hearers is the "ribbon" scene in "*L'Ecole des Femmes*," where the patience of *Arnolphe* is similarly exhausted by the reluctance of *Agnès* to speak, and where he, too, dreads to hear the worst. Somewhat similar is the scene in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," where *Scapin* pretends not to see *Géronte*, and laments the misfortune of the "galère" in order to arouse the curiosity of the father (Act II., Sc. 7), and that in "*L'Amour Médecin*" (Act I., Sc. 6), where the servant laments the supposed misfortune that has happened to the heroine. *Mrs. Malaprop* in this scene resembles *Géronte* in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," who is at first laughing at and enjoying the misfortunes of *Argante*, but soon finds himself also involved. Indeed, the tables are turned on her almost as much as on the father in "*L'Amour Médecin*." The scene also recalls vividly that in "*Le Misanthrope*" (Act IV., Sc. 4), when *Alceste* is put out of patience by the refusal of *Dubois* to tell his tidings. Compare:—

DAVID: Stop him! stop him! Murder! Thief! Fire!  
etc., and

MASCARILLE: Et personne, Monsieur, qui se veuille bouger  
Pour retenir des gens qui se vont égorger!

("Dépit Amoureux," Act V., Sc. 6.)

*Act V., Sc. 2.*—The desire of *Jack* to avoid the notice of his father is like that, for different reasons, of *Monsieur de Porceaugnac*, to avoid the notice of justice, and their failure similar. *Jack's* idea of falling on his sword recalls the threat made by *Don Garcie de Navarre*.



What follows has little connection with Molière. The duel scene has no parallel, but we must note the resemblance between the scene where Sir Lucius seeks to claim Lydia as his Delia with that in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*," where Valère firmly believes he is but asserting his rights in claiming the heroine as his wife. The *dénouement* follows the usual plan. Mrs. Malaprop, in the embarrassment of her exposure, plays the part of a Comtesse d'Escarbagnas, whilst the attempt to provide even for Acres, is like that to provide for Mascarille in "*L'Etourdi*." It may be noted that in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" we have a hint of duelling when Eraste says that, as regards the servants' love for Marinette, "*Il faut que par le sang l'affaire soit vidée.*" But Mascarille, like Acres and David, is no fighting man, and rather than fight for a wife would live and die a bachelor. Mrs. Malaprop's opinion that "men are all barbarians" recalls the saying of Marinette in "*Le Dépit Amoureux*" (Act II., Sc. 4)—

"Foin de notre sottise, et peste soit des hommes."

In this play also, then, we can trace besides certain general resemblances on broad lines similarities in detail, such as lead us to think that Sheridan had Molière in his inner consciousness whilst he wrote. Certain of the characters we have seen are strikingly reminiscent of Molière. Faulkland and Don Garcie de Navarre are more than parallel, whilst Acres and Monsieur de Porceaugnac have too many points in common for the resemblance to be accidental. The character of Lydia is in many respects not too attractive, and cannot be referred to any single character of Molière, and the same applies to Jack Absolute. The similarities in detail make the resemblance stronger.

## CHAPTER V.

**"A TRIP TO SCARBOROUGH."**

This play, always included among Sheridan's works, but really not his own, will, on that account, require less exhaustive treatment at our hands. It is in reality a purified version of Vanbrugh's "Relapse," but in the process of purification it has required to be so far re-modelled in order to be fit for presentation, that it may be looked upon as to some extent Sheridan's. Still the characters are Vanbrugh's and the plot is essentially his. The scenes and incidents which are Sheridan's alone are few, and, for the most part, their interpolation is of small importance.

The fact that Sheridan should undertake the re-casting of a play of Vanbrugh's is itself significant to our purpose. Vanbrugh was not only a student and imitator of Molière, but also a translator of him. If, then, Sheridan is so familiar with the works of Vanbrugh as to undertake the re-casting of one, he must, through him if by no other means, be familiar with Molière and the type of comedy and of character which Molière made his own. And we cannot suppose that Sheridan would be content with studying a pupil of the great master, and not himself go to the fountain-head for inspiration before writing his own plays. We shall see, then, how much this play owes to Molière.

Tom Fashion in his poverty resembles many of the heroes in Molière, but in the fact that he is to become overtly and ostensibly a fortune-hunter, he differs from all save those in Molière from whom our sympathy is soon estranged. We cannot compare Fashion to Tartuffe, or Trissotin, or Diafoirus in anything save in fortune-hunting, and we cannot compare him to other heroes in Molière, for he plainly does not love and is not actuated by love. No idea of sentiment gathers around him to predispose the audience in the success of his enterprise; and if the audience is so predisposed and wishes him well, it is only because of the striking contrast presented between him and his brother. The two characters are shown in such a light as to make us feel the inevitable superiority of Tom Fashion.

The play, indeed, is rather out of the ordinary run of such comedies. The love interest is small, and what there is of it is not of the kind usually favoured in the comedies. The relations between Hoyden and Tom Fashion present not the slightest indication of love; and the other four principal characters, whose

doings furnish a sort of underplot to the play, do not arouse the same feelings of interest and of sympathy that the ordinary lovers, whose love affairs have gone agley, arouse in us. It is thus unlike the majority of Molière's plays, and, in the respects we have mentioned, may approach in similarity to "George Dandin," and even, to some slight extent, to "Sganarelle."

Lory is the inevitable servant of the comedy—his master's confidential adviser and his friend. He takes liberties with his master, but knows, like Don Juan's Sganarelle and Mascarille in "L'Etourdi," how far he may go. He helps his master in his stratagems and is indispensable to him. He shows himself somewhat cowardly at times, as other servants do, for example, Mascarille in the "Dépit Amoureux"; and, like Don Juan's Sganarelle again, he stays with his master although the latter is unable to pay him his due wages. The two brothers in the play, so dissimilar in character, recall the discrepancies between Orgon and his brother in "Le Tartuffe," between Le Malade Imaginaire and his brother, between the brothers in "L'Ecole des Maris," and between Chrysale and his brother in "Les Femmes Savantes."

The character of Colonel Townly is difficult to place. He has evidently had much experience in love, and we may presume that the widow Berinthia is neither his first nor his last amour. He is *du monde*, and does not attract our sympathy to any great extent. Excluding Don Juan and the two impostors in "Les Précieuses Ridicules," we have no such characters in Molière, and Townly cannot be well compared with any of these.

Lord Foppington, who is next introduced, could best be compared with Les Précieuses Ridicules themselves. He has all their high-flown ideas, without their predilection for sentiment in the abstract. The scene between him and his tradesmen, and his anxiety about his personal appearance, remind us forcibly of "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" (Act II., Sc. 5). The resemblance on this point is very striking—the two shoemakers using practically the same words to defend the shoes they have made.

LORD FOP. : Hark thee, shoemaker, these shoes aren't ugly, but they don't fit me.

SHOEMAKER : My lord, I think they fit you very well.

LORD FOP. : They hurt me just below the instep.

SHOEMAKER : No, my lord, they don't hurt you there.

LORD FOP. : I tell thee they pinch me execrably.

SHOEMAKER : Well then, my lord, if those shoes pinch you, I'll be damned.

LORD FOP. : Why, wilt thou undertake to persuade me I cannot feel?

SHOEMAKER : Your lordship may please to feel what you think fit, but that shoe does not hurt you. I think I understand my trade.

LORD FOP.: Now, by all that's good and powerful,  
thou art an incomprehensive coxcomb!  
but thou makest good shoes, and so  
I'll bear with thee.

MONS. JOURDAIN: Vous m'avez aussi fait faire des souliers  
qui me blessent furieusement.

MAÎTRE TAILLEUR: Point du tout, monsieur.

MONS. JOURDAIN: Comment, point du tout!

MAÎTRE TAILLEUR: Non, ils ne vous blessent point.

MONS. JOURDAIN: Je vous dis qu'ils me blessent, moi.

MAÎTRE TAILLEUR: Vous vous imaginez cela.

MONS. JOURDAIN: Je me l'imagine parceque je le sens.  
Voyez la belle raison!

The similarity here has already been noted by Mr. Kerby ("Molière and the Restoration Comedy in England") in his consideration of "The Relapse."

Apart from "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," we have not a fop who plays a leading part in Molière. There are intellectual fops, such as Les Précieuses Ridicules and Les Femmes Savantes, but the out-and-out fop that Lord Foppington is has no parallel in Molière. Neither have we in the plays of the latter an example of a free-lance in love, save Don Juan. Where we have rivalry in love, the rivals are both sincere, and each is in a measure worthy of her he seeks. The egoism of Lord Foppington does not harmonise with Molière's love-sick hero. Egoism, of course, may take different shapes, as in "Le Misanthrope," "Le Malade Imaginaire," "L'Ecole des Femmes," and "L'Ecole des Maris," but in none of these is it treated in the way Vanbrugh treats it here.

The next character introduced—Mrs. Coupler—takes the place of a most unpleasant character in "The Relapse." Sheridan is given to tag-names, such as Molière seldom affects. We have, indeed, Madame de Sotenville descended from the house "de la Prudoterie," and M. Dimanche in "Don Juan" is suspiciously like a tag-name. But the system of applying a name indicative of the character, so common with Sheridan, does not find its origin in Molière. Mrs. Coupler, then, plays the part of the numerous "femmes d'intrigue" of Molière. If she may be compared with one of these more than with another, it would be with Frosine of "L'Avare," or with Nérine of "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac." These two also are engaged in plots to balk the designs of the favoured rival, in order to further those of the less fortunate one. Nérine and Sbrigani are in league to decoy Monsieur de Pourceaugnac and to shatter his reputation, although it is indeed Sbrigani who carries out the greater part of the scheme. As for Frosine, she is in a situation very similar to that of Mrs. Coupler. She has already promised her support to Harpagon, and is doing her best to bring about the match. But when she finds that her requests



are refused, and as she fears for the fulfilment of the promises of her patron, she covertly forsakes him and uses her endeavours to forward the suit of his rival. So it is with Mrs. Coupler. Lord Foppington, she finds out, has no intention of standing by his bargain, so she is easily persuaded to do him a bad turn instead of a good one by helping his brother to make the match instead. And her machinations succeed, to the discomfiture of her former patron, and, we may suppose, the happiness of those who owe their union to her. In these respects, then, Frosine and Mrs. Coupler are identical, and it is highly probable that Vanbrugh had Frosine in mind when he sketched the character of Coupler.

The character of Loveless, again—the married man who wears his heart on his sleeve, and who has none too high a standard of honour—has no parallel in Molière. He is not bad enough to be likened to Don Juan, nor is he so much of a caricature as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, although this latter resembles him in several respects. He, too, would go a-wooing from home, but in his amorous designs is made more a cat's paw of than Loveless. The relations between Loveless and his wife, which ripen into mutual suspicion and distrust which are afterwards thoroughly dissipated, are not unlike those between Sganarelle and his wife, although the wife, in this case, has not the just cause for suspicion that Amanda has. But in nothing else can these two pairs be likened, for the Sganarelle type is totally different from the Loveless type in sentiment and in character. The complaisance of Orgon in "*Le Tartuffe*" with regard to his wife, and his lack of appreciation of her, are indeed somewhat similar to what we have here, but there again the resemblance goes no further. As for Amanda, she has as little in common with characters in Molière as her husband. Madame Jourdain and the wife of Sganarelle resemble her in nothing but in the neglect of their husbands. Orgon's wife does, indeed, play somewhat her part in her fidelity to her husband despite his neglect, but she is not tempted as Amanda is.

The doctor (Probe) and his manner are more after the style of Molière, although here we have not so much a satire on medicine as merely a caricature of a doctor. There is, indeed, a slight attack upon medicine later, which puts us somewhat in mind of Molière again, but the attack has not the virulence of Molière's, and it is so incidental as to be scarcely noteworthy.

LOVELESS: Alas! You undertake you know not what.

BERINTHIA: So far at least, then, you allow me to be a physician.

The trick played by Tom Fashion is similar to those of many heroes in Molière. He gains admittance by impersonating another character, and ends by carrying off her he seeks. We can compare for this the stratagems of, especially, Clitandre in "*L'Amour Médecin*" and Léandre in "*Le Médecin malgré lui*,"

both of whom carry their plots to as successful an issue as does Fashion here. Then we have such plots as those of Adraste in "Le Sicilien," who introduces himself under the guise of a painter, Le Fils du Grand Turc of "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," and so on.

*Act III., Sc. 3.*—The reception given here to Fashion and Lory is very similar to that given to Adraste and Hali in "Le Sicilien," and Lory is as terror-stricken as is Hali (Sc. 5). Don Pèdre has also many serxants accompanying him, and he wishes to be supplied with more than a blunderbuss for protection, but his reception is no more savage than that of Sir Tunbely. The latter himself has numerous prototypes in Molière. He is, indeed, the conventional Cerberus of the unfortunate maiden whom the hero fain would wed. He may be likened again in this respect to Don Pèdre in "Le Sicilien" and also to Trufaldin in "L'Etourdi," who keeps as close a watch over Célie as do either of these two. We have similar characters in "L'Ecole des Femmes" and in "L'Ecole des Maris," and all these, like Sir Tunbely here, are over-reached in the end, and have to submit, with what grace they may, to the shattering of their dearest hopes. Sir Tunbely is not a Harpagon, for he seems to have no compunction about lavishly entertaining his guests at the end, and, loathe as he is to let strangers into his house, it is only through jealous distrust for his daughter.

Hoyden is, as has been said, Lady Teazle in embryo. Her character is perhaps rather exaggerated for Lady Teazle, but it is certainly not more exaggerated than that of Agnès in "L'Ecole des Femmes," and has many points in common with it. Agnès and Hoyden are similarly kept under the strictest restraint, and in as great ignorance as possible—a mode of treatment which serves to make them capable of any extremes to gain their ends, and to outwit the oppressors who have merely succeeded in gaining their hatred. Both characters are unnatural, but are intentionally made so for the purposes of the play. But the character of Agnès gains our sympathy more, for she shows a true womanly heart, whilst the character and sentiments of Hoyden merely excite our risibility, and we are in no way affected by the course which love may take in her case, but are simply left wondering what sort of wife she can make, and how Tom Fashion fares after he has won her and her money. We may surmise that he was at least less plastic than George Dandin, though perhaps not more fortunate in matrimony. Agnès has, indeed, more refinement than Hoyden—her natural character easily repairs any defects of education or experience—but Hoyden is as ready to throw herself at a husband as are the peasants in "Don Juan." There are other heroines, too, in Molière whom Hoyden resembles in certain respects. In "L'Ecole des Maris," Isabelle is similarly kept in close confinement and similarly eludes her gaoler. But

she is not the ignorant tomboy that Hoyden is, and plays skilfully for her ends, and successfully, whereas Hoyden is a mere tool in the hands of others. So also with Célie in the hands of Trufaldin. She also displays ingenuity and womanly spirit, which are totally lacking in Hoyden. Dorimène in "*Le Mariage Forcé*" resembles Hoyden in that she is prepared to accept any husband, in order to be free from the control of her father. They get married for the same reason as George Dandin's wife, and all three probably lead their husbands as wretched an existence.

Loveless in Berinthia's dressing-room reminds us again of the confession extracted from Louison in "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," whilst his having to hide in the closet when Amanda enters is similar to the exploit of Horace when he, too, finds himself interrupted in Agnès' room by the entrance of Arnolphe. But Horace overhears nothing from his hiding place, for Arnolphe refrains from speaking, and merely gives vent to his feelings by means of groans, whereas Loveless learns an important secret from his wife's lips, all unbeknown to her.

The garden scene is somewhat reminiscent of that in George Dandin. There also two lovers meet, and their conversation is overheard by the husband, who finds it none too flattering to himself. We have the opposite case here, where Loveless is taught a lesson by his wife's integrity and unsuspecting nature—a lesson which leads to his reform and to his return to his wife. This scene serves the same purpose practically for Loveless, as that between Tartuffe and Elvire for Orgon. It opens their eyes to the truth. But it is more effective in the case of Amanda, as she is all unaware of the presence of listeners, and acts with an innate dignity and charm which make the guilty eavesdroppers look indeed contemptible. She defends her reputation with as much verve as Lucile in the "*Dépit Amoureux*," and in her defence of her husband and her friend almost rises to the eloquent height of Elvire in "*Don Juan*." Her character resembles, in its simplicity and goodness, that of Henriette in "*Les Femmes Savantes*"—a character which is not to be turned aside by specious argument from the straight path of duty and of virtue.

The impersonation of Lord Foppington by Tom Fashion, and the duping of Sir Tunbelly are, as we have seen, parallel in general to those ruses in Molière whereby lovers gain admittance to the object of their desires; but in this case it is carried farther and with more brazenness, for not only does Tom Fashion carry out his purpose, but he also turns the tables on his brother and flouts him to his face. The discomfiture of Lord Foppington is almost as complete as that of the impostors in "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," and, although his status is finally recognised, he cuts but a sorry figure to the end.

The help of the Chaplain in performing the marriage depends on the seductions of the Nurse, as that of Polichinelle ("*Le*

Malade Imaginaire," Act I., Sc. 8) depends on Toinette.

NURSE: Prevail with him! or he shall never prevail with me, I can tell him that.

TOINETTE: Je n'ai personne à employer à cet office que le vieux usurier Polichinelle, mon amant, et il m'en coûtera pour cela quelques paroles de douceur, que je veux bien dépenser pour vous.

The characters in this play and in "The Relapse" are practically identical. Coupler becomes Mrs. Coupler, Worthy becomes Townly, Syringe becomes Probe, and a Sir John Friendly disappears. As for incidents the first three acts are similar, with the omission of some dialogue between Amanda and Berinthia. In the last two acts there is considerable divergence. Loveless, in "The Relapse," carries his love affairs farther, and is not in the end converted by his wife's virtue and brought back to her. We have no garden scene and no reconciliation. In place of that Amanda is brought to see proof of her husband's treachery, in spite of which she retains her high ideas of honour and repels the insidious Worthy. Again, Fashion is as successful with Hoyden as in Sheridan's play, but Lord Foppington's predicament is soon relieved by the intervention of Sir John Friendly, and Fashion leaves his bride and rides off in haste. Hoyden is quite prepared to go through another marriage, and, for their own sakes, the Chaplain and the Nurse resolve to hold their tongues. But they are decoyed to Fashion's lodgings, and are bribed to speak the truth, so that Lord Foppington is again outdone at his own wedding party, and Sir Tunbelly leaves the stage cursing them all. The whole of the fifth act of "The Relapse" is omitted or changed almost beyond recognition by Sheridan. The entrance of Amanda at the close of Act IV., the garden scene with eavesdroppers, Fashion's assurance before Lord Foppington, and the plot among the guests to make a fool of that peer, as well as the final reconciliation of all, are original in "A Trip to Scarborough."



## CHAPTER VI.

## "THE CRITIC."

This, the last play of Sheridan's, with the exception of his tragedy "Pizarro," is one entirely different from those which have preceded, and also from the bulk of Molière's work. Here we have not the usual love interest to form the framework of the play. What love interest there is is a caricature, and is contained in the tragedy rehearsed. The purpose of the play is primarily satirical. The satire is directed against the would-be patron of the theatre—the "mock Maecenas"—and the crowd of hack-writers who would fain make their profession the theatrical, and whose puny efforts, not succeeding, lead them to revile the more accomplished authors whose ability serves merely to provoke their spleen. They are presented to us as a fussy, petty band, and the work of one of them, as typical, is made to appear as ridiculous as possible. What exactly was Sheridan attacking in this play? Probably the critics of his time in general, and certainly some who had, either in writing or by word of mouth, been striking at himself. Genest (Vol. VI., p. 125) says:—"Sir Fretful Plagiary was meant for Cumberland, whose dedication to detraction, prefixed to 'The Cholerick Man,' fully entitled him to the appellation of Sir Fretful—and he has been much accused of plagiarism."

The title of the play would itself be sufficient to send us to "La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes" of Molière to see if there was there the resemblance foreshadowed by the name. And we do find that resemblance, although this play does not owe all to "La Critique." "L'Impromptu de Versailles" may also be looked upon as a model which Sheridan has followed, or, at least, from which he has taken an idea for this play; and the framework of these two together practically form the framework of "The Critic." In "La Critique" we have a gossiping band who fancy themselves as authors, and who are highly incensed at the superior ability and great success of Molière. These, being met together, discuss "L'Ecole des Femmes," and thereby find an opportunity for attacking Molière in general, and particularly in this play. We have there different kinds of critics—from the critic who defends the play with logical reasoning to the one who never listened to it but condemns it root and branch. We have not in "The Critic" this choice of characters. None of the characters there is one to whom we should care to submit a work for approval or disapproval, and all occupy about the same level of ineptitude. But the same purpose is served in each

play—that of casting ridicule upon such would-be critics as make a great noise and are absolutely unqualified to judge. Such stand out prominently, and by their words, both in Molière and in Sheridan, show what attacks the rancour of their enemies had subjected these authors to. The moral of each play is the same. True criticism is welcome, but the ill-natured attacks of petty, jealous imitators are a fit subject only for ridicule.

Sheridan goes somewhat farther than Molière, and not only shows up the petty critic by his own words, but gives us a burlesque example of what that critic would be likely to achieve in the way of writing a play. This exaggerated caricature serves the purpose more fully than the mere innuendos contained in “*La Critique*” with regard to Lysidas, the author, and the variety sustains the interest more fully. In this respect the play resembles “*L’Impromptu de Versailles*,” where, also, we have a rehearsal superintended by the author. Molière, of course, has not the intention of presenting us with a caricature of a play, but desires to cloak his satire with the worries and anxieties of an author trying to get his play ready in a short time. Here, as elsewhere, Sheridan may have been influenced also by English models. The idea of a rehearsal was no new one. We find it in Fletcher’s “*Knight of the Burning Pestle*,” and it has been supposed that Sheridan borrowed to some extent from Buckingham’s “*Rehearsal*.” It is significant, too, that Sheridan’s first essay in literature, a farce called “*Jupiter*,” written in collaboration, contains the germ of the same idea of a rehearsal. But however much English models may have to do with “*The Critic*,” Sheridan knew too much of Molière not to be influenced by him in this type of comedy as in the others.

We remark in the play again the prevalence of tag-names, which in themselves would be sufficient to denote the character of each person. Dangle’s zeal to be a modern Maecenas brings more into prominence his lack of judgment. He, however, plays his part in all good faith, and he is the type to be taken advantage of and made a cat’s paw of by others, whilst they laugh at him behind his back. He takes himself and his work seriously, and is really surprised at the lack of interest shown by Mrs. Dangle in what he is doing. Mrs. Dangle has, indeed, more insight into the true state of affairs than her husband. She sees how ridiculous the latter makes himself, and her remarks contain exactly the gist of Dorante’s defence of “*L’Ecole des Femmes*,” and of Molière’s defence of his own plays in “*L’Impromptu*.”

MRS. DANGLE: The public is their critic, without whose fair approbation they know no play can rest on the stage, and with whose applause they welcome such attacks as yours, and laugh at the malice of them, where they can’t at the wit.

**DORANTE:** Je voudrais bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n'est pas de plaire, et si une pièce de théâtre qui a attrapé son but n'a pas suivi un bon chemin. Veut-on que tout un public s'abuse sur ces sortes de choses, et que chacun n'y soit pas juge du plaisir qu'il y prend?

Dangle and his friends are like Lysides, the petty critic at whom the true author of merit can afford to laugh; or like Boursault, the unknown author who is set up to attack the one they fear to attack openly. Dangle's plea that "the stage is the mirror of nature," is used with a purpose different from Uranie's "Ce sont miroirs publics où il ne faut jamais témoigner qu'on se voie"—but the sentiment is identical. Mrs. Dangle's aversion to things theatrical is the result of her husband's preoccupation thereby, rather than the result of the exercise of a critical faculty, and therein she resembles, though not so ludicrously, le Marquis who objects to "L'Ecole des Femmes," because at the play there was such a crush that he had his clothes disarranged.

Sneer, who enters next, is more of a double character than Dangle, and loves to conceal his true character and to have sly hits at others whilst pretending to be with them. He reminds us, more or less, of Elise in "La Critique," whose true character is shown us at the beginning, but who, after that, wears a hypocritical mask, and seems to sit admiringly at the feet of Climène. Sneer does not go so far as that in his dealings, but his words do not always express his true sentiments.

The dialogue between Sneer and Dangle concerning their "friend" Sir Fretful, before and after his appearance on the stage, is similar to that between Elise and Uranie with regard to Climène. We see by their remarks how small an opinion they have of these characters, and yet, in their presence, they are mostly laudatory, although Sir Fretful does get a few home truths thrust on him. Elise, indeed, takes the side of Climène and ridicules her the more effectively by seeming to agree with her and by flattering her vanity. The same foretaste of the character of Arsinoé is given in the dialogue between Célimène and Acaste ("Le Misanthrope," Act III., Sc. 3), whilst Dangle's "though he is my friend," is like Arsinoé's—

"Oui, *toute mon amie*, elle est et je la nomme  
Indigne d'asservir le coeur d'un galant homme."

The character given to Sir Fretful by Sneer reminds us especially of the characters of Orgon in "Le Misanthrope" and of Sganarelle in "Le Mariage Forcé." These, too, "seduce you to give a free opinion" and "reject your observations with petulant arrogance," and, with others, they play the part in their several plays that Sir Fretful does here. Orgon desires a frank opinion from Alceste on his verses, and the result is a challenge.



Sganarelle desires of his friend if he does right to marry, and when the latter would reply in the negative, takes it very ill, and would be quite angry if Géronimo did not retract his observations, finding them to be useless. Sir Fretful, however, sees through Dangle and Sneer as well as they see through him, and it does not require Mrs. Dangle's remark to make him acquainted with how he stands in their opinion.

The innuendos of Sir Fretful and Sneer anent Drury Lane, and the manager of it writing himself, refer naturally to Sheridan, and are exactly in the style of "La Critique" and of "L'Impromptu." Sheridan, like Molière, ridicules the attack of his enemies by putting such words into the mouth of a character whose plays would probably not be accepted anywhere. So Lysidas, full of his own play though he is, is easily brought to attack Molière, and to ascribe to him ridiculous faults. Sheridan here is covertly accused of plagiarism by a man whose works would not bear to be plagiarised. (There is said, indeed, to be a hint here of a stupid rumour that "The School for Scandal" was not written by Sheridan at all!) Molière's works are criticised by those who have not the slightest notion of criticism. Climène and Le Marquis make wild statements and do not trouble to criticise. Lysidas is a pedant whose mind cannot rise above rigid rules, and even these he cannot properly apply. In "L'Impromptu" we have indicated similar attacks contained in "Le Portrait du Peintre," attacks easily repelled by Molière.

After Sir Fretful has done away with objections (even Mrs. Dangle has some) to his play, as easily as Sganarelle in "Le Mariage Forcé," he has to undergo an attack similar to that which is exchanged by Célimène and Arsinoé in "Le Misanthrope" (Act III., Sc. 4). That scene, where first Arsinoé to Célimène and then Célimène to Arsinoé, describes the evil report circulated about each other's characters, obviously with the intention of hurting each other's feelings, is absolutely identical with this scene, where the "friends" of Sir Fretful present to him a fictitious report calculated to wound him deeply and to break down his vaunted *insouciance* with regard to newspaper criticism. The result, too, is the same—all but an open rupture between the parties concerned. No one in these scenes is in the least duped by the velvet glove which hides the fist of mail, and whether it be Arsinoé, Célimène or Sir Fretful, they feel the blow all the more keenly than they would an open attack. This method of wounding the feelings is not so common that we may not suppose that the idea owed its birth in the mind of Sheridan to recollection of the scene in "Le Misanthrope" of Molière.

The profession of Puff finds no exponent in Molière. His initial hypocrisy is, indeed, equal to that of Don Juan, and for his varied "puffs" we may suppose that Trissotin and his friend in "Les Femmes Savantes" earned a livelihood in as peculiar



ways. But Puff himself is original, and is probably a type whom Sheridan had actually met or whose ways he knew of. After all, he is merely a forecast of up-to-date journalism, and, in the light of that, the exposition of his trade has not, perhaps, the satiric force it would have had when the play first appeared.

Act II. brings us to a scene similar to that of "L'Impromptu." We are in front of the stage, and are to see the play rehearsed. Molière's play is, however, to be a comedy, and is directly to satirise his enemies. Sheridan brings Puff's tragedy on the stage, and indirectly satirises those puny intellects who would enter the lists with him and vent their spleen on him when they find themselves beaten. Sheridan has not direct detractors to satirise as Molière has, however. It is noteworthy that Sheridan made few enemies. His satire, where it occurs, is too general for any person or any class of persons to be hurt by it, and it never contains the bitterness which we so often find in Molière. Certain classes of French society could not fail to take to themselves the strictures of the comedies; but nowhere throughout Sheridan can even a class in general complain of unfair treatment at the hands of the dramatist. Sheridan ridicules the ordinary frailties of human nature which are common to all, but from which each one thinks himself exempt, and he does it in such a way that no one takes it to himself. Hence the satire on Puff and his friends is more general and less pointed than that contained in "La Critique" and in "L'Impromptu."

The anxiety of Molière regarding the time taken in rehearsing, and the king's desire to see the play, is replaced by Puff's exasperation at the continual pruning which his play has undergone. The remarks made by the three critics, and the advice given occasionally by Puff to the actors, are somewhat similar to those in "L'Impromptu." Thus Molière has to correct La Grange as regards "le ton d'un marquis," whilst Puff has to improve Beef-eater in his part, and to correct the "start" of Tilburina. "The Critic" is humorous, both in the play rehearsed and in the interjected remarks. Probably Sheridan's idea of writing it owed its origin to a thought similar to that which prompts Uranie in "La Critique" (Sc. 6) to suggest the writing of that play.

In his capacity of theatre manager he would be brought into contact with such scenes whose humour would lead him to dramatise them. Pure humour is the object aimed at and achieved. We have nothing in Molière exactly to compare with the play rehearsed, where ridiculous figures of speech, combined with as ridiculous critical remarks, serve to sustain the humour.

The remark of Sneer that "not only the Justice, but the clown seems to talk in as high a style as the first hero among them," is a criticism which applies throughout to the plays of Sheridan. In critical mood we may wonder at moments at the fine language and brilliant wit of the lesser characters, as Sneer here wonders at

the lofty style of the clown, but we should not be inclined to pass it off with the remark of Puff—"Heaven forbid they should not in a free country!" The underplot is, in burlesque, the skeleton of many of the comedies. For the discovery of a long-lost child we need only look to "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," "*L'Etourdi*," and "*L'Ecole des Femmes*" amongst others. Of course, what is a serious plot in these comedies is mere buffoonery here, but it serves to show that this type of discovery scene was in great vogue for this class of comedy. Lord Burleigh's headshake and all that it meant remind us again of the jargon of Cléante in "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," and of the Lieutenant in "*St. Patrick's Day*," which expressed so much by means of so few words.

The play as a whole, then, may owe its idea to Molière, but in details and in purpose differs vastly from both "*L'Impromptu*" and "*La Critique*."

## CHAPTER VII.

**A General Comparison of the Plays of Molière and Sheridan.**

For the purpose of such a comparison, we may take first "Le Misanthrope" and "The School for Scandal."

The main argument which Lysidas in "La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes" brings against Molière's play is that there is no action. "Car, enfin, le nom de poème dramatique vient d'un mot grec qui signifie agir, pour montrer que la nature de ce poème consiste dans l'action; et dans cette comédie-ci il ne se passe point d'action, et tout consiste en des récits que vient faire ou Agnès ou Horace." The answer of Dorante is, "Les récits eux-mêmes y sont des actions suivant la constitution du sujet." Such an objection, and such an answer, might be made with equal applicability to "Le Misanthrope." In the greatest plays of Molière we find that action is reduced to a minimum, and the plot is worked out by means of the speeches delivered by the various characters of the piece. In other words, the audience does not look upon the actual events as they take place, but is informed of their happening through the medium of these speeches. Thus, in "L'Ecole des Femmes," what action there is takes place off the stage, and we are informed of it by the words of the actors. The different escapades of Horace in the pursuit of his love affairs are not shown on the stage. It is somewhat different again in "Le Tartuffe" and in "Le Misanthrope." There is no "outside" action, as it were, to be explained to the audience—indeed there is little action at all, and the play consists more of a psychological problem than of dramatic action. Interest centres round the leading character of the piece and the development of his peculiar mania, real or affected. This development, with its effects and subsequent issue, is not furthered by action in the literal sense of the word, but is brought about by the grouping of characters and the harmony or-discord of thought. In "Le Tartuffe" there are scenes where action aids the plot, such as the eavesdropping of Orgon, but in "Le Misanthrope" no such scenes occur. We have presented on the stage people whose words give the clue to their characters, and it is by words, not by deeds, that these characters are shown to us in their true light. No more action is required in such plays to sustain the interest than is afforded by the unforeseen discovery of some secret which alters the whole bearing of the characters towards each other, and produces a *dénouement*, if not always satisfactory to the audience, at least always inevitable. But if there be no

action literally, there is always action in the sense in which Dorante intends it, and in which we may presume Molière intends it. In these plays the situation, simple as it is, certainly counts for much, but the thoughts expressed count for more. And these thoughts and the expression of them are action in themselves, and by their means the plot is unfolded and the play "acted" just as surely as those pieces replete with buoyant action.

Whilst it requires genius to write a great play full of action in the literal sense, it requires still greater genius to write one whose action, in the sense we have indicated, holds the audience or the reader spellbound to the end. And in this respect Molière stands pre-eminent. What is it, then, in Molière which, in the absence of action, enchains our attention and leads us on unlagging to the end? A certain type of human life is presented to us, and the views and sentiments of this type, relative to the other characters, form the whole interest of the plot. In "*Le Misanthrope*" Alceste is the centre of interest, and we follow his career with sustained expectation as to what is to happen next in his intercourse with those around him. As proof of this we may quote the criticism of Auger concerning Act III.:—"Cet acte est le moins fort de tous, et il n'en faut pas donner d'autre raison, sinon qu' Alceste ne paraît qu' à la fin. C'est sa présence qui, à défaut d'action, anime tout l'ouvrage." The encounter between Alceste and Philinte in the opening scene gives the audience an idea of what is to be expected when Alceste is met by characters not so thoroughly devoted to him. Curiosity is further piqued by the passage-at-arms between Oronte and him, and when we learn of his love affairs and get some insight into the character of Célimène, the presence of Alceste is indispensable to us, and what takes place without him is of interest, no doubt, but not of the supreme interest of the rest of the play. Thus, speaking of Act III. Sc. 5, Auger declares:—"Cette scène, toute admirable qu'elle est, ne peut être considérée que comme un épisode, servant à la peinture des mœurs et au développement d'un des principaux personnages de la pièce; elle n'est nullement essentielle à l'action." The interest which centres round the other characters is primarily relative to Alceste. Apart from him the rest would be but walking shadows without flesh or blood. His presence gives them a meaning and a purpose, but they remain secondary, and serve as background to the picture of Alceste's bitter humour.

Now, Sheridan's masterpiece is not in the same way a "one-man" play. The "*School for Scandal*" contains characters whose interest and value in the play might be said to be co-extensive. The main point of difference between the two is that there is more variety in Sheridan, both as regards characters and as regards action and situations, a point which does not in any way make Sheridan superior to Molière as a



dramatic author. Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are not more indispensable to the play than Joseph Surface and Maria, nor *vice versa*. Each has his part in a well-ordered whole, and none predominates over the others. It can scarcely be said that one is subsidiary to another. The whole scheme of the play is interwoven and firmly knit together, so that the absence of a character would cause a sensible lacuna. As for the action in the play we have to mention only such scenes as the selling of the pictures, the discovery of Lady Teazle, and the discomfiture of the nephews, to show that it contains action such as does not exist in "Le Misanthrope." The character of the play is essentially different. We are not now following the mental development of one obsessed by antipathy to the conventions. The interest of the play lies as much in the situations which arise to bring about the *dénouement*, as in the characters who play their parts in them. These situations are cleverly devised, and to find their parallels we must go to other plays of Molière than "Le Misanthrope." But whilst Molière can be shown to be equally inventive of situations of humorous effect, Sheridan has not the power that Molière gives proof of here of dispensing with such situations and relying solely on the interest created by his central character for the success of his play. It is a height of genius to which Sheridan does not ascend, and it is in such plays as "Le Misanthrope" and "Le Tartuffe" that Molière soars far above the English dramatist.

Just as Sheridan includes more scenes in his plays than Molière, so he also includes more characters. The characters of "Le Misanthrope," if we exclude three which are negligible, number only eight, whilst we have double that number in the "School for Scandal." Naturally, for a "one-man play" fewer characters are required, and the interest is more concentrated. Alceste is the centre around which the play develops, and there is little or nothing that takes place in the play which has not direct reference to him. Even the love affairs of Eliante and Philinte are controlled by his actions and subordinate to his will; so that just as we have but one scene, we have also but one plot with a strictly limited number of characters. This characteristic of Molière, in contrast to Sheridan and most other English dramatists, is an important one. The fewness of the characters and the singleness of the plot tend to give a clearness and precision to his plays, such as we do not find in the English works. Such a characteristic is all the more necessary in the case of plays which point a moral, as Molière's best plays do, for a multiplicity of characters and a complexity of plot would merely serve to obscure the moral to be emphasised. As it is, our attention is never really taken away from Alceste; in "Le Tartuffe" it is never diverted from the "faux dévot," and so on. It is only in lighter plays, such as "Les Fourberies de Scapin," that we find not two plots, but a two-fold plot. The two love affairs there run concurrently and

intertwinedly as they do in "The Rivals," but we cannot say that one forms a leading and the other a minor plot. Rather, both form a single plot.

It is again a mark of the highest genius that such plays are of paramount interest, and that the single story carries us on through the five acts without the aid of any subsidiary plot. In "The School for Scandal," on the other hand, we have shown how more than one character claims a leading part of our attention, and the fortunes of more than one pair are at stake in the *dénouement*. The relations of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, the intrigues of Joseph Surface with regard to Maria and Lady Teazle, and the love between Charles and Maria, complicated as it is by the machinations of Lady Sneerwell and Snake, all hold the stage in turn and divide our attention amongst them. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the moral of the play is frequently lost sight of. Not that Sheridan in general wished to point a moral in his dramas. Molière, consciously or unconsciously, teaches whilst amusing; Sheridan amuses only. If further proof of this were needed it would be found in the fact that Sheridan's plays, which have the least pretension to point a moral, require an epilogue "to coax some moral from the play." But Sheridan's plays are on the whole non-moral. We do not come away from them with a distinct conception of a type of character to be admired or to be detested. The play which most nearly approaches the moral type is "The School for Scandal;" but even there the moral is obscured by side issues and scenes which have no connection with it, whereas Molière, in his more serious plays, never diverges from the path which leads to the inculcation of his lesson.

Sheridan, in disregarding the dramatic unities, merely follows the example set by his predecessors in the English drama. Molière, in strictly following them, set the example to his successors. But English dramatists who have been profoundly influenced by Molière have practically all refused to follow him in this respect, and have chosen rather the unfettered liberty which gave them more scope for scenes such as suit the English stage. The result has been a loss in coherence and in precision in the English plays, with an increase of variety which does not always conduce to a higher standard of play.

Necessarily the type of character around which the "problem" play centres is different from those of the other plays. It is more distinct and stands out in greater relief. The lines are drawn boldly and even somewhat exaggerated in order to produce their full effect. An Alceste or a Tartuffe in full panoply would be difficult to find in society, but the audience who see their characters represented can imagine their existence. They are natural characters, though we may not have met them in real life. But their distinctive qualities are brought more to the

forefront than we find them in daily life, and are insisted upon to the exclusion of all else, so that we may the more thoroughly learn the lesson intended. In the lighter plays of Molière, and in all Sheridan's plays, the characters are drawn with a lighter touch. There is no insistence upon one characteristic, and the varying currents of human character are allowed free scope and development.

As for this development, in the case of Alceste we see him throughout at grips with the society which surrounds him, and we trace its effect upon him and his effect upon them. His is a strong character from the beginning, as shown by the stand he makes against convention, and his strength is further tested and proved by the course of events. He stands by his colours and remains true to his convictions despite the entreaties of friends and the scoffing of enemies, and in the end his character shows up more pure and sterling for the trouble it has come through. Not that his character is in any degree perfect. He is not above the curse of jealousy. To quote Auger again:—"Le quatrième acte est le plus chaud, le plus animé, le plus dramatique de toute la pièce; et cependant c'est, sous un rapport, celui qui tient le moins au sujet, car Alceste n'y est point misanthrope; il n'y est que jaloux, et il suffirait, pour le prouver, de dire que sa grande scène avec Célimène est entièrement tirée de Don Garcie de Navarre." His dealings with Eliante are in both instances egoistic. In Act IV., Sc. 2, he cries for vengeance, and to Eliante's question—

"Moi, vous venger ! comment ?"

he replies—

"En recevant mon cœur ;  
Acceptez-le, madame, au lieu de l'infidèle."

Again in the last scene, after having tried every means to secure a *rapprochement* with Célimène compatible with his own ideas of what is right, he turns to Eliante with the remark—

"Souffrez que mon cœur, dans ses troubles divers,  
Ne se présente point à l'honneur de vos fers."

"Ma main de se donner n'est pas embarrassée,"

replies Eliante, as she turns away to Philinte.

It might be objected, too, that he lowers himself too far in his dealings with Célimène, who is so little worthy of his regard, especially after he has acquired proof positive of her perfidy. But these traits of weakness simply serve to make his character more natural and real. Without them it would be too adamant. The fact, too, that he starts from a wrong conception of the meaning and necessity of convention, and persists in that conception, does not make his character less strong or less noble. We find him at the end in chastened and in sorrowful mood, convinced by what he has gone through, of the impossibility of



the struggle he had entered upon, and finding his only refuge in flight. He has passed through a crisis which has left its mark upon him, and he acknowledges his own defeat.

As for the development of the leading characters of "The School for Scandal," Sir Peter and Lady Teazle make their exit with a promise of happiness which did not seem possible at the commencement of the play. They have also developed naturally through dint of circumstances, sometimes by the aid of fortuitous events, but the ending seems somewhat too good to be true in their case, and we are left wondering how long the reconciliation will last. The reconciliation, however, suits the spirit of the play and is not impossible. The characters of both have been rudely tried, and the result of the ordeal they have come through is their reunion in sympathy and esteem. Lady Teazle has learned her lesson as Célimène refuses to do, a fact which brings about a happier ending for Sir Peter than is possible for Alceste. The character of Joseph Surface rather resembles that of Alceste. Bad though it is, it is at least strong in its consistency and its badness is sustained throughout. Such is the view taken also by Lamb, who pushes it even further, when he says that Charles is "the real canting person of the scene—for the hypocrisy of Joseph has its ulterior legitimate ends, but his brother's professions of a good heart centre is downright self-satisfaction." We may not be prepared to go as far as Lamb with regard to Charles Surface, but, with regard to Joseph, the only difference between him and Alceste is the difference in their moral starting point. Each shows the same persistence in the attempt to gain his ends, and neither actually gives in when foiled. However much we may dislike the morals of Joseph, there is still something in the strength of his character to admire which we do not find in Charles. We must make due allowance for the egoistic reasons for Uncle Oliver's praise of Charles, and, if he was but sowing his wild oats, at least we may be surprised at his sudden conversion, and be inclined to impute it more to motives of self-advancement and interest than anything else. At least if it is not due to such motives it is all the less natural. His character throughout the rest of the play is not displeasing, and certainly pleases the modern audience better than that of Joseph. But the character of Joseph is more thoroughly sustained and more finely rounded off. There is a buoyant humour permeating "The School for Scandal" which finds no place in "Le Misanthrope." But we seem in the former play to be farther removed from real life, and certainly in the picture scene, where Charles thoughtlessly accepts the generosity of "little Premium," we are very far removed from reality. Lysidas may be wrong in "La Critique" in saying that Arnolphe should not be so free with his money, but surely we are right in criticising Charles who, without suspicion, accepts the bounty of the broker.



To sum up these points, we see that Molière in his "problem" play dispenses with action, in the literal sense—action of a kind in which "The School for Scandal" abounds. The characters put on the stage by Molière are strictly limited to requirements, and the lesson is not obscured by divergences or side issues such as we have in "The School for Scandal," where the variety of characters and incidents tends to cause more confusion. The unities are observed by Molière and not by Sheridan. The characters are more living and develop more naturally.

If we now leave the "problem" type of play of Molière and take the type of comedy, of which "Les Fourberies de Scapin" is an outstanding example, we find the parallel between it and Sheridan's plays very close. In this play of Molière's, and in all of which it is the type, we have action such as we have not in "Le Misanthrope," but still in a very limited form. The unities are observed as usual, and where the unities are observed the limitations imposed by them must necessarily be counterbalanced by relations of what takes place off the stage. In this case Molière does not feel himself so limited, for everything that really belongs to the play takes place before the eyes of the audience. Those parts which contain the greatest degree of action are the ones which approach most nearly to farce. Such are the scenes where Scapin is accused by his master and retaliates with good effect (Act II., Scenes 3 and 4), where Sylvestre plays the part of the brave (Act II., Sc. 6), and where Scapin avenges himself on Géronte (Act III., Sc. 2). Apart from such scenes the play consists of recitals and of the pitting of the fathers' interests against those of the sons, aided by the "fourbes" Scapin and Sylvestre. The action of "The Rivals" is of a similar character, with less of the element of farce. There is action throughout the play, but nothing which resembles those scenes of "Les Fourberies de Scapin," which we have cited above. In this case the characters of "The Rivals" are little more numerous than those of "Les Fourberies de Scapin," but, as before, the scene changes with infinite variety, taking us from a street in Bath to King's-Mead-Fields, with occasional halts in the lodgings respectively of Mrs. Malaprop, Jack Absolute, Acres, and Julia. Sheridan has taken advantage of this liberty without achieving anything by it more than Molière achieves without it. Indeed, the limitation to one place of action tends to give a restful continuity to the piece, as compared with the continual shifting of the scene in "The Rivals," and our attention is thereby focussed on the persons and not diverted to the place. It is doubtful if anything is gained by the more natural setting of each scene; for, after all, the setting is of small importance from the point of view of the drama itself, and in Molière the coming and going of the characters is not unnatural, although they all appear in the same place. A characteristic similar to each play is the double love interest, but in the similarity

there is an essential difference. The two-fold love interest in "Les Fourberies de Scapin" really constitutes one plot—we could not say that one is the leading and the other the minor plot—the two are inextricably intertwined and interwoven, and are inseparable from each other in the construction, whilst the *dénouement* simply serves to bring them closer together. With our attention fixed mainly on one the play would be lop-sided and incomplete; with the two the balance is preserved. The two plots, then, run as one, and in the able hands of Scapin they *are* one. It is not so in "The Rivals." The leading plot—the love affairs of Lydia and Jack—has no close connection with the minor plot, the somewhat turbulent relations between Julia and Faulkland. The latter plot, indeed, is not very important for "The Rivals," as it is but a concession to the sentimental comedy which was then fast dying, but not dead. It was this type of comedy from which Mrs. Dangle derived edification. The satire in "The Critic" is worth quoting in this connection:—

DANGLE (reading): *Bursts into tears and exit.* What! is this a tragedy?

SNEER: No! that's a genteel comedy, not a translation—only taken from the French; it is written in a style which they have lately tried to run down; the true sentimental, and nothing ridiculous in it from the beginning to the end.

This plot, then, which Sheridan concedes to the "true sentimental" forms a minor plot of no very great value, and is utterly distinct from anything that we have in "Les Fourberies de Scapin." Its effect is to divide the interest of the play, and would prove irritating to an audience not in sympathy with the spirit of the "true sentimental." Probably, it is just this which has killed the play, so far as modern acting is concerned. Whilst "The School for Scandal" still holds the boards at frequent intervals, "The Rivals" is no longer billed.

Just as we have no problem in these plays—they are essentially non-moral despite Sheridan's epilogue—so we must look less for development of character. In a farce like "Les Fourberies de Scapin," character, seriously speaking, is of no importance, and is not shaped by the events and the progress of the play as it is in the more serious comedies of Molière, whilst, as we have seen, Sheridan does not go in so much for the delineation of character in his comedies as for scenes of free humour and telling situations. In "Les Fourberies de Scapin" each person succeeds in gaining his own ends, but his or her character has not been influenced by what it has gone through, and has in no way changed from what it was at the commencement of the play. In "The Rivals," where the element of farce does not predominate, character is developed to some extent.

Lydia Languish is, permanently we hope, cured of her romantic tendencies, and the characters of Acres and of Mrs. Malaprop (caricatures though they be) show changes which will leave a permanent mark upon them. But there is no purposed character drawing or development in this or in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*." The only character which really develops is that of Faulkland, but, to quote Genest, "His is not a pleasing character," and, as we have seen above, the play rather loses than gains by his inclusion in it. And similarly, where farce abounds, and in artificial comedy, we are somewhat removed from reality. There is little that pertains to real life in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," and with regard to "*The Rivals*" we may quote the criticism of Gosse:—"Not much resembling life indeed, but full of whim and wit and theatrical activity. Where the aim of the dramatist is to amuse less effort is made to conform to reality."

To sum up these points, Molière again observes the unities and Sheridan ignores them. There is action in both plays. action which especially in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*" enters the realm of farce. We have in each a double love interest, but whilst in "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*" there is practically one plot, the "sentimental" minor plot of "*The Rivals*," whilst diverting attention from the main issue, lowers the standard of the comedy in the eyes of modern readers at least. And finally the plot and characters of both plays are removed from reality.

It has been objected to Sheridan's comedies that the dialogue of servants and minor characters is as polished and sparkling as is that of the principals. This is true, and is not in accordance with reality; but it is a point which the reader is willing to pass lightly over for the sake of the brilliance and wit of the dialogue. Only once do we find the language of the peasants included in the dialogue, if we exclude the pretended simplicity of Humphry Hum. That is in "*St. Patrick's Day*," in the scene between the recruiting sergeant and the peasants, and there the simplicity of the latter is made the butt of the wit of the former. The growling of the soldiers at the beginning of the same play is somewhat similar, and is marked by the unintentional humour of their words. The power of repartee, and the brilliant wit in the mouths of those we should not expect it from, cannot fail to be remarked. Even Acres, the typical bumpkin, has a choice of language which surprises us, and a facility in the concoction of oaths which we should scarce expect from one of his slow-moving brain. Sheridan has never drawn a really successful picture of a dullard such as Molière has frequently depicted. Monsieur de Porcaugnac does not belie his character, as Acres does, by giving proof of innate ability and penetration. George Dandin does not go out of his way, as Isaac Mendoza does, to make witty sallies and pleasantries on himself and others. There is no humour in Monsieur de la Souche, save in the exaggerated

opinion he has of himself and in his relations with those around him. And so examples could be multiplied. Each character in Sheridan seems to be overflowing with the verbal wit which characterised the author himself, and the dupes have no less telling asides than those who dupe them. This is one of the reasons why Sheridan's plays, on the whole, are farther removed from reality than are those of Molière.

We may conclude by quoting the criticism of Hazlitt on Sheridan, which applies equally well to Molière :—

“ This is the merit of Sheridan's comedies, that everything in them *tells* ; there is no labour in vain. His comic muse does not go about prying into obscure corners or collecting idle curiosities, but shows her laughing face and points to her rich treasure—the foibles of mankind.”



The following are the books which have been found most helpful for this subject :—

- Auger : Oeuvres de Molière.  
 Brooke (Stopford) : History of English Literature.  
 Chambers : Cyclopædia of English Literature.  
 Dictionary of National Biography.  
 Encyclopædia Britannica.  
 Genest : English Stage.  
 Gosse (Edmund) : Eighteenth Century Literature.  
 Hazlitt : Lectures on the English Comic Writers.  
 Hervey (Lord John) : Letters.  
 Kerby (W. M.) : Molière and the Restoration Comedy in England.  
 Lamb (Charles) : On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century.  
 Meredith : An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit.  
 Moore (Thomas) : Memoirs of Sheridan.  
 Saintsbury : Short History of French Literature.  
                     Short History of English Literature.  
 Sanders (L. C.) : Life of Sheridan.  
 Selwyn (George) : Letters.  
 Taine : Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise.  
 Thackeray (W. M.) : The Four Georges.  
 Vanbrugh : Dramatic Works.  
 Walpole (Horace) : Journal of the Reign of George III.  
                     Do.                      Letters.

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*Le Président du Jury,*

*G. DOTTIN.*



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